

**Job Insecurity, Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment, and General Health of
Educators in the Sedibeng West District**

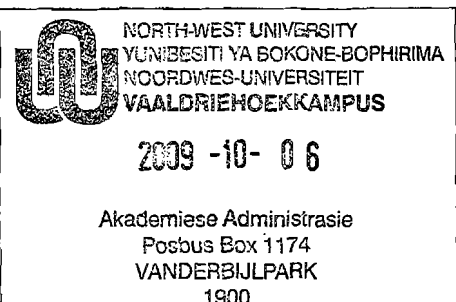
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Magister Artium in Industrial Psychology in the School of Behavioural Sciences at the North
West University, Vaal Triangle Campus.

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REMARKS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The references, as well as the editorial style as prescribed by the Publication Manual (*4th edition*) of the American Psychological Association (APA), were followed in this mini-dissertation. This practice is in line with the policy of the Industrial Psychology Programme of the North-West University.
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This mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article.

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SUMMARY

TITLE: Job Insecurity, Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment, and General Health of Educators in the Sedibeng West District.

KEYWORDS: Job Insecurity, Psychological Empowerment, Work Engagement, and General Health of Educators.

Organisations are faced with challenges and opportunities due to the constantly changing world of work. These changes lead to organisational members to compete or survive in the dynamic world of work. Job Insecurity, Psychological Empowerment, Work Engagement as well as the employee's well-being are affected by these changes.

The South African education environment has been changing since the beginning of the new political dispensation in 1994. The changes include the social, economic, technological and organisational environment. The unsuccessful implementation of the outcome based education and subsequent review has placed Educators under considerable pressure. The changes are being exacerbated by the unprecedented world economic down turn which has created further uncertainty in employment and has resulted in increased levels of Job Insecurity and employee disengagement. Employee engagement and job satisfaction become the key aspects that may contribute to high performance levels and the retention of motivated employees during this period of uncertainty. The schools that would engage their staff members are likely to retain their Educators whilst unengaged Educators will feel more insecure and are likely to look for other jobs elsewhere.

The objective of this study was to establish the relationship between Job Insecurity, Psychological Empowerment, Work Engagement and General Health of Educators in the Sedibeng West District. A cross sectional survey design was used to collect data from an available sample of Educators in the specified district. A Job Insecurity Questionnaire (JIQ), Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire (PEQ), Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and General Health questionnaire (GHQ) as well as a Biographical Questionnaire were administered in this regard.

Results indicated a statistically significant and negative relationship between Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment as measured by Influence and Attitude. Higher levels of Job Insecurity are therefore associated with lower levels of perceived Psychological Empowerment (as measured by Influence and Attitude). A statistically significant negative correlation was obtained between Job Insecurity and Work Engagement. Job Insecurity was found to be statistically significant associated with three dimensions of General Health (Somatic Symptoms, Social Dysfunction and Severe Depression).

A practically significant correlation of medium effect was obtained between Influence and Work Engagement as measured by the UWES. Influence also showed statistically significant negative correlations with Somatic Symptoms, Social Dysfunction and Severe Depression. The Attitude factor obtained a practically significant correlation of large effect with Work Engagement and furthermore statistically negatively correlates with the three GHQ factors, being Somatic Symptoms, Social Dysfunction and Severe Depression. A practically significant negative correlation of medium effect was obtained between Work Engagement and Social Dysfunction. Somatic Symptoms and Severe Depression showed a statistically significant correlation with Work Engagement.

Regression analysis indicated that Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment as measured by Attitude have a significant predictive value towards Work Engagement and General Health as measured by Somatic Symptoms, Social Dysfunction and Severe Depression.

Based on the findings, limitations of the research followed by recommendations for the Department of Education and for future research were made.

OPSOMMING

TITEL: Werksonsekerheid, Werkbegeestering, Psigologiese Bemagtiging en Algemene Gesondheid van Opvoeders in die Sedibeng-Wes Distrik

SLEUTELWOORDE: Werksonsekerheid, Psigologiese Bemagtiging, Werkbegeestering, en Algemene Gesondheid van Opvoeders.

Organisasies word gekonfronteer met uitdagings en geleenthede as gevolg van die voortdurend veranderende werksomgewing. Hierdie veranderings veroorsaak dat lede van organisasies met mekaar moet kompeteer om te oorleef in hierdie dinamiese werksomgewing. Werksekerheid, Psigologiese Bemagtiging, Werkbegeestering, asook die werknemer se welstand word deur hierdie veranderings beïnvloed.

Die Suid-Afrikaanse opvoedkundige omgewing is sedert die begin van die nuwe politieke bestel in 1994 aan veranderings onderwerp. Hierdie veranderings sluit die sosiale-, ekonomiese-, tegnologiese- en organisatoriese omgewing in. Die onsuksesvolle implementering van uitkomsgebaseerde onderrig en die gevolglike hersienings het Opvoeders onder aansienlike druk geplaas. Hierdie veranderings is vererger deur die onvoorsiene afswaai in die wêreld ekonomie, wat op sy beurt onsekerheid rakende werksgeleenthede geskep het. Die resultaat was verhoogde vlakke van Werksonsekerheid, asook onbetrokkenheid by werknemers. Werknemerbetrokkenheid en Werksbevreëdiging is sleutelaspekte wat kan bydra tot hoë werkverrigtingsvlakke en die behoud van gemotiveerde werknemers gedurende hierdie onsekere tye. Die skole wat hulle personeel begeester, is in 'n beter posisie om hulle Opvoeders te behou. Onbetrokke Opvoeders sal baie meer onseker voel, en meer geneig wees om ander betrekkings te soek.

Die doelwit van hierdie studie was om die verhouding tussen Werksonsekerheid, sielkundige bemagtiging, Werkbegeestering en Algemene Gesondheid van opvoedkundiges in die Sedibeng-Wes Distrik te bepaal. 'n Dwarsdeursnee-opnamemetode is gebruik om data te verkry vanaf 'n beskikbare groep opvoedkundiges in die spesifieke distrik. 'n Werksonsekerheidsvraelys (JIQ), Psigologiese Bemagtigingsvraelys (PEQ),

Wersbetrokkenheidskaal (UWES) en Algemene Gesondheidsvraelys (GHQ) asook Biografiese Vraelys is hiervoor gebruik.

Die korrelasieresultate het 'n statisties-betekenisvolle en negatiewe verhouding tussen Werksonsekerheid en Psigologiese Bemagtiging, soos gemeet deur Invloed en Houding, verkry. Hoër vlakke van Werksonsekerheid word dus geassosieer met laer vlakke van waargeneemde Psigologiese Bemagtiging (soos gemeet deur Invloed en Houding) 'n Statisties-beduidende negatiewe korrelasie is verkry tussen Werksonsekerheid en Werkbegeestering. Daar is bevind dat Werksonsekerheid statisties-beduidend verbind kon word met drie dimensies van Algemene Gesondheid (Somatiese Simptome, Sosiale Wanfunksionering en Erge Depressie)

'n Medium-effek prakties-beduidende korrelasie is verkry tussen Invloed en Werkbegeestering soos gemeet deur die UWES. Invloed het ook statisties-beduidende negatiewe korrelasie getoon met Somatiese Simptome, Sosiale Wanfunksionering en Erge Depressie. Die Houdingsfaktor het 'n prakties-beduidende korrelasie met hoë impak met Werkbegeestering verkry, en verder ook statisties-negatief met die drie GHQ faktore Somatiese Simptome, Sosiale Wanfunksie en Erge Depressie gekorreleer. 'n Prakties-beduidende negatiewe korrelasie met medium impak is verkry tussen Werkbegeestering en Sosiale Wanfunksionering. Somatiese Simptome en Erge Depressie het 'n statisties-beduidende korrelasie Werkbegeestering met getoon.

Regressie-analise het aangedui dat Werksonsekerheid en Psigologiese Bemagtiging, soos gemeet deur Houding, 'n beduidende voorspelbare waarde het ten opsigte van Werkbegeestering en Algemene Gesondheid soos gemeet deur Somatiese Simptome, Sosiale Wanfunksionering en Erge Depressie.

Gegronde op bevindings van die studie is tekortkominge van die navorsing uitgewys, gevolg deur aanbevelings aan die Departement van Opvoeding, asook idees vir toekomstige navorsing.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This mini-dissertation covers the relationship between Job Insecurity, Psychological Empowerment, Work Engagement and General Health of educators in the Sedibeng West District. In this chapter the problem statement, objectives, method of research as well as the paradigm perspective will be discussed. It concludes with a summary giving an overview of the chapters that comprises this mini-dissertation.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Studies indicate that in the world of work today, whatever one's industry, one's company is competing against the top employers in the marketplace for critical skills essential for attaining strategic objectives (Boninelli & Meyer, 2004). As organisations focus on competition and profit margins, workers are faced with both real and anticipated job loss, causing individuals to feel insecure about their jobs and future work life (Reynders & Stander, 2006).

Organisations have become more complex and dynamic and they changed fast over the past decade. This led managers to manage change and to create a work environment that supports employees in adjusting to change (Plattner, 2004). Over the past few years, our highly technological and complex society has added to people's pressures and increased the stress on our education system and the professionals working in it (Statt, 2004). Various factors have contributed to the crisis in teaching, including population shifts, downsizing, rightsizing, restructuring, merging and excessive paper work (Emener, 2004; Nel, 2007).

The changes in the curriculum from Outcome Based Education (OBE) to National Curriculum Statement has implied a great organisational change as educators were forced to be retrained while continuing with their jobs (Emener, 2004; Nel, 2007; Jacobs, 2002). The fast pace of change from 1994 in the Department of Education was seen to be the cause of "added stress" amongst educators (Emener, 2004; Jacobs, 2002). According to Jackson and Rothmann (2005) a report on the employment and working conditions of educators concluded that job-related stress was a growing problem facing educators. These conditions have led to

increased emotional and physical problems among educators, thus posing an urgent need to empower them (Emener, 2004; Seed, 2008)

School environments may not be overly empowering in a situation where educators' work roles are a habit and recurring, or where educators are isolated from peers and do not have enough time to try anything new or different (Dee, Henkin & Duemer, 2003; Seed, 2008). The formation of school systems discourages initiative and they function to sustain governance structure grounded in control. However, empowered educators tend to have a stronger affective attachment to the school and consequently greater Psychological Empowerment at work, and correspond generally to less ill health (Dee et al., 2003; Hochwalder & Brucefors, 2005; Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson, & McGrath, 2004).

Perceived powerlessness and job insecurity in the workplace is detrimental to employee's well-being as it results in reduced psychological well-being characterised by factors such as strain related psychosomatic complaints, anxiety, irritation and depression (Bizumic, Reynolds, Turner, Bromhead & Subasic, 2009; Catalano, Rook & Dooley, 1986; Yousef, 1998). Extensive research has been dedicated to the study of potentially harmful results of occupational stress on psychological well-being (Ho, 1996). According to Sverke and Hellgren, (2002) as well as Way and MacNeil, (2006) individual employees will react differently to the gradually changing characteristics of employment conditions and jobs (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005). Against this background, a model of a healthy work organisation will be briefly discussed.

Wilson et al. (2004) developed a healthy work organisation model. They defined a healthy organisation as one characterised by deliberate, systematic, and combined efforts to maximise employee health and productivity by providing well-designed and meaningful jobs, a caring social-organisational environment, and available and balanced opportunities for career and work-life enrichment. This model (figure 1) consists of six interrelated components namely:

- Organisational attributes; entail organisational values, organisational beliefs and organisational policies and procedures,

- Organisational climate; consists of organisational support, co-worker support, communication, participation with others and supervisors, and safety and health climate,
- Job design; includes workload, control autonomy, job content, role clarity, work scheduling and environmental and physical work conditions,
- Job future; includes job security, procedural and distributive equity, learning opportunities, and flexible work arrangements,
- Psychological work adjustment; is represented by five dimensions: organisational commitment, job satisfaction, efficacy (Psychological Empowerment) and perceived job stress (Wilson et al., 2004).
- Employee health and well-being; component consists of measures of employees' perceived well-being, psychological health, attendance behaviour (e.g., intention to leave the organisation) and engagement in behaviour that endangers health (Wilson et al., 2004).

Wilson et al. (2004), as well as Stander (2007) points out that employees' opinions of their organisation have an effect on how they perceive their climate (empowerment and leadership empowerment), which in turn influences the manner in which people relate to their jobs (job insecurity/uncertainty) and perceive their future in the organisation, eventually impacting their work adjustment (Psychological Empowerment, Work Engagement), health and well-being (Catalano et al., 1986; Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005; Stander, 2007; Yousef, 1998).

Wilson's model is the first integrated model of a healthy organisation that acknowledged that there are multiple possible reactions one may have to job insecurity, and that one's reaction will differ as a function of individual and organisational contingencies and constraints. Doing research on multiple antecedents and consequences of job insecurity informs an organisation on what can be done to compensate for higher job insecurity (for example empowering workers with skills to handle organisational change may reduce negative affective reactions and organisational outcomes of job insecurity) (Probst 2002; Seed, 2008). Committed (engaged), high efficacy and low stressed employees contribute positively to organisational effectiveness and therefore are reflective of a healthy work organisation (Probst, 2002). This research will focus on how the employees foresee their future in the organisation and the

impact on Psychological Empowerment and Work Engagement leading to their total well-being (General Health).

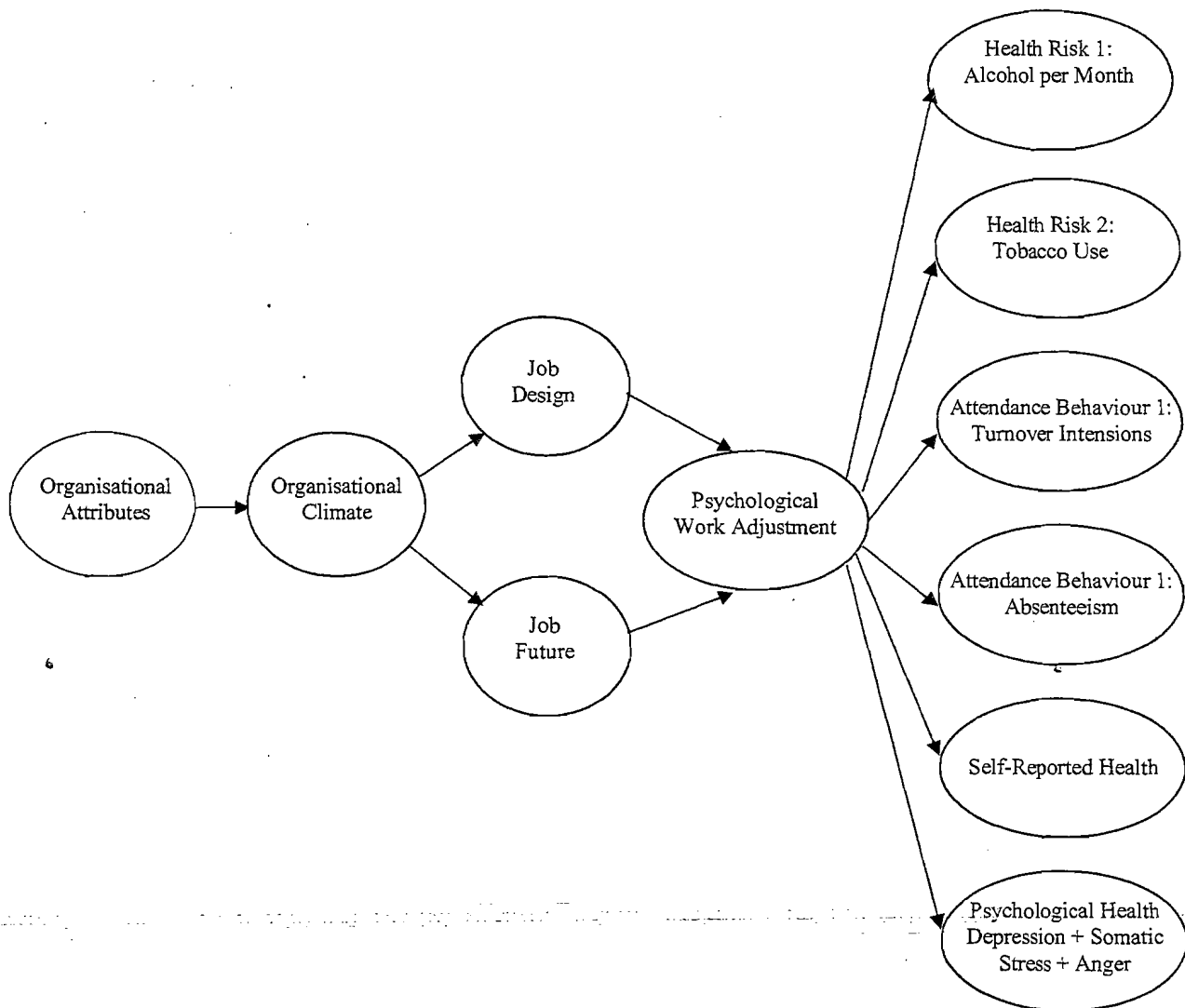


Fig. 1 Model of a healthy organisation (Wilson et al., 2004)

Relative to other constructs, Psychological Empowerment in contrast has received comparatively less attention (Dee, Henkin & Duemer, 2003). It is conceptualised as a mindset that employees have about their organisation instead of as something that management does to employees. Empowering work environment seems to augment professionalism, facilitate employee leadership, enhance the quality of work life and allow valuable implementation of school improvement (Dee et al., 2003).

Research shows that when school teams are appropriately supported, it created an environment where educators can collaborate to solve complex problems, share responsibilities and learn new skills (Dee & Henkin, 2001). Empowerment characterises the educators' association with an organisation. This may impact a sense of connectedness and may affect decisions on the membership contract in that organisation. It appears that empowerment enhances an educator's strength of the dedication to the school. It provides the structural and cognitive contexts for engagement in resulting action (Konczak, Stelly, & Trusty, 2000). Empowerment improves interpersonal trust between managers and employees. Consequently this trust-building practice results in strengthened organisational commitment (Nyhan, 2000).

Psychological Empowerment refers to a set of psychological circumstances necessary for individuals to feel in control of their own future (Spreitzer, 1992). Psychological Empowerment at the workplace is described as a sense of meaning, competence, self-determination and impact (Spreitzer, 1992, 1997). Hochwalder and Brucefors (2005) demonstrated that the four empowerment dimensions impact negatively on ill health. Meaning is considered as a core protective factor against ill health. Competence was found to result in improved ability to deal with demands and therefore prevents ill health. Self-determination is defined as a form of autonomy which is instrumental in reducing strain. Impact is regarded as the converse of learned helplessness and thus a shield against ill health (Hochwalder & Brucefors, 2005).

Spreitzer and Doneson (2005) identified five antecedents that have been assessed in relation to empowerment: organisational design, high quality of relationships, and specific role of employee, employee characteristics, and transformational leadership. These antecedents fit well with the model of healthy work organisation. Organisational design, that is enriching job characteristics, a wide range of control and supportive work climate/ culture, was found to

correlate to high levels of employee empowerment (Noorliza & Hasni, 2006). Accessible information about the operations and performance of the organisation, and rewards based on individual performance, improves employee empowerment (Noorliza & Hasni, 2006). Organisational rank and tenure have been associated with higher levels of empowerment.

Psychological Empowerment matters to both employees and the entire organisation. (Spreitzer & Doneson, 2005). Feelings of empowerment result in employees having more positive attitudes in terms of their satisfaction at work as well as their commitment (Chen, Kanfer, Kirkman & Allen, 2007; Wilson et al., 2004). When low level hospitality employees felt empowered, they tended to show more promotion satisfaction and fewer propensities to turn over (Savery & Luks, 2001). Workers who perceived themselves as empowered had increased work satisfaction and decreased likelihood to leave the organisation (Laschinger, 2001; Savery & Luks, 2001). Spreitzer, Kizilos and Nason (1997) found that empowered employees also reported less job strain. In the view of Nelson and Simmons (2003) meaningful work may lead to positive feelings, as a result encourage employees to stay engaged in spite challenging work circumstances. Jackson et al. (2006) explains positive feeling as the level to which cognitive appraisal of the prevailing situation is taken to benefit as well as enriching an individual's well-being.

Work Engagement is defined as an energetic condition whereby an employee is dedicated to outstanding performance at work and is confident of his or her impact on the organization (Schutte, Toppinen, Kalimo & Schaufeli, 2000). It is described by three dimensions, namely: vigour, dedication and absorption. Vigour refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience at the work-place, as well as willingness to exert effort and to persist even through difficult times. Dedication refers to a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge. Absorption refers to a tendency to concentrate fully and to be deeply engrossed in work (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma & Baker, 2002). Literature indicates that Work Engagement can make a person feel energised and generate positive feelings of well-being (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2002; Turner, Barling & Zacharatos, 2002). Schaufeli and Bakker, (2002) as well as Makgobotloane, (2005) mentioned that work could lead to illness as well as good health, or it could require effort and be associated with negative feelings and lack of freedom, or can give energy, enable development and generates positive feelings. In line with this, research has found engaged employees to be related to good health and positive work influence (Sonnentag, 2003). In support of the latter statement the Constitution of the World

Health Organisation (2000), defines General Health as a state of absolute physical, social and mental well-being; it is not simply the absence of disease or illness.

In this research, General Health is conceptualised by the theory of Goldberg and Hillier (1979) which identifies four concepts, namely Somatic Symptoms, Anxiety & Insomnia, Social Dysfunction and Severe Depression. Somatic Symptoms is characterised by an individual's inability to feel perfectly well and in a good health as well as feeling being in need of a tonic. Anxiety and Insomnia is represented by questions such as "I have lost much sleep over worry" and "have felt constantly under strain". Social Dysfunction refers to the incapacity of an individual to enjoy normal daily activities and feeling that he/she is not playing an important role. Severe Depression is represented by questions such as "Felt that life is not worth leaving" and "Felt that life is entirely hopeless" (Goldberg & Hillier, 1979).

In support of Wilson's model Hakanen, Baker and Schaufeli (2006) indicated that high job demands may tire out employees' mental and physical resources and may therefore result to ill health, while job resources foster Work Engagement and General Health. Thus intensified job design (i.e., increasing its positive attributes like autonomy and decreasing workload) is associated with intensified psychological work adjustment (i.e., increase in job satisfaction, Psychological Empowerment and decrease in job stress) (Spreitzer et al., 1997). Strengthening job future, i.e. increasing job security, is linked with strengthening psychological work adjustment. Consequently, as we strengthen psychological work adjustment there is corresponding increase in well-being, decrease in alcohol intake, increase in psychological health and attendance behaviour (Goldberg & Hillier, 1979). Wilson et al. (2004) indicates the crucial role which employees and their perception play in organisational outcomes, especially health and well-being.

Alterations of procedures, policies and actions that the education department implement to improve the standard of education must include strategies targeted toward educators to facilitate their buy-in and understanding (Emener, 2004; Verhoeven, Kraaij, Joeke & Maes, 2003). The teaching profession has been plagued by many problems, including growing dissatisfaction of educators about their working circumstances (characterised by lack of involvement, heavy workloads, and low salaries) (Sachs, 2001a). This is exacerbated by the growing efforts by governments to control educators' work in the rouse of globalisation and

the additional discourse of managerialism (Jackson & Rothmann, 2005; Sachs, 2001a; Verhoeven et al., 2003), and the growing negative public picture of the education profession.

From the above, taking into consideration the ever changing world of work, the demands made on workers, their resources to deal with these adjustable demands, including Work Engagement, Job Insecurity, Psychological Empowerment and General Health, the following research questions can be asked.

- How are the constructs Job Insecurity, Psychological Empowerment, Work Engagement and General Health conceptualized in the literature?
- What are the relationships between Job Insecurity, Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment and General Health of educators?
- Can Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment hold predictive value with regards to Work Engagement?
- Can Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment hold predictive value with regards to General Health?

- In order to answer the above research questions, the following research objectives are set.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives are divided into general and specific objectives.

1.2.1 General objective

The general objective of this study is to determine the relationship between Job Insecurity, Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment and General Health among educators.

1.2.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this research are:

- To conceptualise Job Insecurity, Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment and General Health from the literature.

- To determine the relationships between Job Insecurity, Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment and General Health of educators in the Sedibeng West District.
- To determine whether Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict the level of Work Engagement of educators in the Sedibeng West District.
- To determine whether Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict the level of Somatic Symptoms of educators in the Sedibeng West District.
- To determine whether Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict the level of Social Dysfunction of educators in the Sedibeng West District.
- To determine whether Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict the level of Severe Depression of educators in the Sedibeng West District.
- To determine whether Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict the level of Anxiety and Insomnia of educators in the Sedibeng West District.

1.3 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

A certain paradigm perspective that includes the intellectual climate and the market of intellectual resources (Mouton & Marais, 1992), directs the research. This research falls within the boundaries of behavioural sciences and more specifically, Industrial Psychology. In the present study, Industrial Psychology is regarded as the discipline- specific belief which refers to the scientific study of human behaviour in a work situation (Muchinsky, Kriek & Schreuder, 1998).

The sub-disciplines are Organisational Psychology, Organisational Behaviour, Psychometrics and Personnel Psychology. The sub-discipline relevant to this research includes Organisational Psychology and Psychometrics. Robbins, Ondendaal and Roodt (2003:7) as well as (Plug, Louw, Gouws & Meyer, 1997) define organisational psychology as “a field of study that investigates the impact that individuals, groups, and structures have on behaviour within organisations for the purpose of applying such knowledge towards improving an organisation’s effectiveness”. Psychometrics refers to the branch of psychology where the measuring of any behavioural aspect requiring the use of particular procedures according to particular rules, is measured in order to allocate numerical values to that behavioural aspect (Smit, 1996).

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A cross-sectional survey design will be used to reach the research objectives. This design can be used to assess interrelationships among variables at one point in time, without any planned intervention (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997). Since no intervention is planned, a correlation design will be utilised (Huysamen, 1993). This design is ideally suitable and applicable when the aim of the study is predictive and descriptive in nature (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997).

1.5 RESEARCH METHOD

This research, pertaining to the specific objectives, consists of two phases, namely a literature review and an empirical study.

In phase one a complete literature review regarding the following will be obtained: Job Insecurity, Psychological Empowerment, Work Engagement, and General Health, and any relationship explored between these constructs.

Phase two consists of the empirical study and includes the research designs, study population, measuring instruments and data analysis.

1.5.1 Participants

In relation to this study a total population of ± 500 available educators will be used. The population will include both males and females from different post levels in the Sedibeng West District. Both permanent and contract appointed educators will be allowed to participate in the study.

1.5.2 Measuring Instruments

The following measuring instruments will be used in this study:

The *Job Insecurity Questionnaire* (JIQ) (De Witte, 2000) will be used as a measure of Job Insecurity. This 11 - item questionnaire will be used to measure the perceived Job Insecurity

of the participants (De Witte, 2000). The items have both cognitive and affective dimensions of Job Insecurity and are arranged along a 5-point Likert scale with 1 = strongly agree, 3 = unsure and 5 = strongly disagree. De Witte (2000) reported a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,92 of total and 0,85 for affective scale and 0,90 for the cognitive scale. Both cognitive and affective factor loading were found to overlap and correlated interdependently very high ($r=0,76$). In South Africa, Heymans (2002) reported alpha coefficient of 0,81 for total and 0,85 for the affective scale. For cognitive a Cronbach coefficient of 0,47, which is below the acceptable standard was found. However, it is still acceptable for further analysis although some refinements were recommended (Heymans, 2002).

The Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire (MEQ) (Spreitzer, 1995) will be used. Spreitzer (1995) constructed this instrument after collecting extensive data to provide insight into personal conceptualization of empowerment. It is a 12-item instrument consisting of three items assessing each dimension of empowerment namely, meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Examples of subscales for each dimension are, meaning: "the work I do is meaningful to me"; competence: "I have mastered the skills necessary for my job", self-determination: "I have significant autonomy in determining how to do my job"; and impact: "I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department". The scale provide responses from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree. Evidence supporting both convergent and discriminative validity for these dimensions of empowerment has been reported. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for four dimensions of empowerment ranged from 0.79 to 0.88. Overall fit statistics showed a goodness of fit value of 0.93 (Spreitzer, 1992, 1995).

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) will be used to measure the levels of engagement of the participants (Schaufeli et al., 2002). The UWES measures three dimensions of engagement, which are conceptually seen as the opposite of burnout. They are vigour, dedication and absorption, which are scored on a seven-point frequency-rating scale, varying from 0 = never to 6 = everyday. The questionnaire has 17 items and includes questions such as "I am bursting with energy everyday in my work"; "time flies when I am at work" and "My job inspires me". The alpha coefficients for the three subscales varied between 0,80 and 0,91. UWES has been found to be valid and reliable for the South African situation. Storm and Rothmans (2003) obtained the following alpha coefficients for the UWES in a sample of 2 396 members of the South African Police Service: Vigour: 078;

Dedication: 0,89; Absorption: 0,78. Coetzer (2004) in a sample of employees of an insurance company found high alpha coefficients. Moeletsi (2003) reported overall internal consistency of 0,93.

The General Health Questionnaire designed by Goldberg and Hillier (1979) to measure psychological well-being was used in this research. The original version of GHQ consisted of 140 items. However a shortened 28-item version was later developed, which will be used in this study. These 28 items are divided into 4 subscales, which are; Somatic Symptoms (SS), measured by the first 7 items of the scale; Anxiety and Insomnia (AS), measured by item 8 to 14, Social Dysfunction (SD), measured by item 15 to 21; and Severe Depression (SD) measured by items 22 to 28. An example of a question relating to Somatic Symptoms subscale would be “I have recently felt that I am ill”, and on Social Dysfunction subscale an example of a relating question would be “I have recently felt that I have been taking longer over the things I do”. An example of a question relating to Anxiety and Insomnia subscale would be “I have recently felt that everything is getting on top of me”, and on Severe Depression subscale an example of a relating question would be “I have recently felt life is entirely hopeless”. A low score is a possible indication of positive mental health, whilst higher scores are indicative of a more negative state of mental health (Goldberg & Hillier, 1979). Goldberg and Hillier (1979) reported an internal consistency coefficient of 0,69 to 0,90. A Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,83 for Somatic Symptoms, 0,88 for Anxiety and Insomnia, 0,80 for Social Dysfunction and 0,91 for Severe Depression was reported. Studies in South Africa reported good reliability indices and Chronbach coefficients (Wissing & Van Eeden, 2002).

1.5.3 Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis will be carried out with the help of the SPSS program (SPSS Institute, 2006). Factor analysis will also be used to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement. The Cronbach alpha coefficients and inter-item correlation coefficients will be used to assess the internal consistencies of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) will be used to analyse data. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient will be used to specify the relationship between variables. The level of statistical significance is set at $p < 0,01$ and the effect sizes will be computed to assess the practical significance of the

relationships. A cut-off point of 0,03, which represents a medium effect, is set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients (Steyn, 2002).

Regression analyses will be carried out to determine the percentage variance in the dependent variable that is predicted by the independent variables. The square of correlation will also be determined to indicate the proportion of variance in any two variables, which is predicted by the variance in the other (Cohen, 1988).

1.5.4 Research procedure

For ethical purposes all educators participating in the study will be required to sign an Informed Consent Form. A letter requesting educator participation as well as motivation of the research will be given to the Gauteng Education Department. Confidentiality will be secured. All measuring instruments will be administered within work place on dates most suitable for educators.

1.6 CHAPTER DIVISION

The chapters in this mini-dissertation are presented as follows:

Chapter 1: Problem statement

Chapter 2: Research article

Chapter 3: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

1.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the motivations for the present study and the steps in the research process have been stated. The problem statements, aims of the study, the paradigm perspectives and the research method have been discussed. Lastly a, prospective chapter division is also indicated.

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JOB INSECURITY, WORK ENGAGEMENT, PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT, AND GENERAL HEALTH OF EDUCATORS IN THE SEDIBENG WEST DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to establish the relationship between Job Insecurity, Psychological Empowerment, Work Engagement and General Health of educators in Sedibeng West District. The measuring instruments that were used included the Job Insecurity Questionnaire, the Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and the General Health Questionnaire. A cross sectional survey design was used. A response of 309 completed questionnaires was obtained out of a total 546 questionnaires. Results indicated a statistically significant negative relationship between Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment, as well as Job Insecurity and Work Engagement. Job Insecurity was found to be statistically significantly associated with General Health, while Psychological Empowerment (Influence and Attitude) indicated a statistically significant negative correlation with Job Insecurity. A practically significant correlation was obtained between Influence and Work Engagement as well as Attitude and Work Engagement respectively. A significant relationship was found between Work Engagement and General Health. Regression analysis indicated that Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment have a significant predictive value towards Work Engagement and General Health.

OPSOMMING

Die doelwit van hierdie studie was om die verhouding tussen Werksonsekerheid, Psigologiese Bemagtiging, Werkbegeestering en Algemene Gesondheid van opvoedkundiges in die Sedibeng-Wes Distrik te bepaal. Die Werksonsekerheidvraelys, Bemagtigingsmeting-vraelys, Die Utrecht werksbetrokkenheidskaal en die Algemene Gesondsvraelys is onder andere as meetinstrumente toegepas. 'n Dwarsdeursnee-opnamemetode is gebruik. Uit 'n totaal van 546 vraelyste is 'n respons van 309 vraelyste

terugontvang. Resultate het 'n statisties- betekenisvolle negatiewe verhouding tussen Werksonsekerheid en Psigologiese Bemagtiging, asook tussen Werksonsekerheid en Werkbegeestering getoon. Werksonsekerheid is statisties-betekenisvol geassosieer met Algemene Gesondheid, terwyl Psigologiese Bemagtiging (Invloed en Houding) 'n statisties-beduidende negatiewe korrelasie met Werksonsekerheid aangedui het. 'n Prakties-beduidende korrelasie is verkry tussen Invloed en Werkbegeestering, asook tussen Houding en Werkbegeestering. 'n Belangrike verhouding is tussen Werkbegeestering en Algemene Gesondheid uitgewys. Regressie-analise het aangedui dat Werksonsekerheid en Psigologiese Bemagtiging 'n beduidende voorspelbare waarde het ten opsigte van Werkbegeestering en Algemene Gesondheid .

INTRODUCTION

Organisations have become more complex and dynamic over the past decade. South Africa is believed to be a vibrant country with a growing economy that continues to place great demands on its education and training system (Keevy, 2005). Over the past few years our highly technological and complex society has added to people's pressures, and increased the stress on our education system and the professionals working in it. (Statt, 2004). As organisations focus on competition and profit margins, workers are faced with both real and anticipated job loss, causing individuals to feel insecure about their jobs and future work life (Reynders & Stander, 2006). This led managers to manage change and to create a work environment that supports employees in adjusting to change (Plattner, 2004). According to the National Policy Framework for Teachers and Development (2006) educators work in extremely complex conditions, mainly due to the pervasive result of apartheid, as well as the consequences of the new policies which are needed to bring about changes in the education.

According to Jackson and Rothmann (2005), a report on the employment and working conditions of educators concluded that job-related stress is a growing problem facing educators. Various factors have contributed to the crisis in teaching, including population shifts, downsizing, rightsizing, restructuring, merging and excessive paper work (Emener, 2004; Makhwathana, 2007). The introduction of Outcome Based Education (OBE) has implied a great organisational change as educators were forced to be retrained while continuing with their jobs (Jacobs, 2002). Since 1994 the Department of Education has introduced a number of changes. After OBE a new curriculum was introduced namely Curriculum 2005, followed by Revised National Statement and lastly the New Curriculum Statement (Makhwathana, 2007).

These changes in the Department of Education were seen to be the cause of "added stress" amongst educators (Jacobs, 2002). Educators were expected to execute these changes and they found it difficult to do so (Booi, 2000). As educators were faced with their significant role as agents of change, many educators, head teachers, as well as senior education managers reported to be suffering from innovation overload (Jansen, 2001; Sayed, 2004). To address this adverse outcome, there is a need for educator involvement in the process of curriculum revision through empowerment (Seed, 2008). Empowered educators can

contribute in making decisions about curriculum, instruction, assessment, and scheduling (Booi, 2000; Seed, 2008).

According to Seed (2008) educators are the executors of the curriculum and, must be in the forefront to improvement and revise the curriculum standards. Researchers believe that educators have a better experience than any other stakeholders in education today whether or not the curriculum is what it needs to be (Seed, 2008). Educators must take a leading role and be involved (decision-making) in every facet that concerns their job rôle (Booi, 2000; Seed, 2008). In support of this Liden and Arad (1996) mentioned that empowerment is the idea of sharing power between superiors and subordinates with the goal of cascading relevant decision-making to lower levels of the organisational hierarchy. In this perspective, power means having formal authority or control over organisational resources and the ability to make decisions relevant to a person's job or role (Lawler, 1986).

In 1994, the South African teacher education setting was fragmented across a broad variety of institutional locations. After ten years, initial teacher education was taking place in a very different environment, formed by a decade of extensive legislative, policy and structural transformation (Bush, 2008). While transformation was essential and inevitable after the democratic transition of 1994, consecutive waves of internal restructuring, college incorporation and higher education mergers placed heavy demands on educators, academics and management (Bush, 2008).

It is critical that organisations commit to ongoing change processes to ensure survival and growth in an increasingly competitive business environment (Nel, 2007). The increased flexibility on the labour market has resulted in feelings of uncertainty in many individuals. As employers react to intensive worldwide competition through the deregulation of labour, job uncertainty has become a widespread problem. It has been shown to have considerable health impacts in a growing number of employees (Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Siegrist, 1996; Warr, 1990). Based on the above it will be imperative to study the impact of uncertainty on educators' feelings of Psychological Empowerment and their well-being. Researchers argued that employees cannot expect their relationship with the employing organisation to be life-long and secure, similarly they cannot expect their job content and career development to be permanent and reliable (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Hartley, Jacobson, Klandermans & Van Vuuren, 1991; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002).

Job insecurity

According to Dekker and Schaufeli (1995) as well as Rosenblatt and Ruvio (1996), Job Insecurity is the overall concern about the potential continuation of the job, whereas Heany, Israel and House (1994) conceptualise Job Insecurity as a perception of possible threat to continuity of an employee's present job. Consequently Job Insecurity has become a frequently examined stressor in modern working life (Hellgren & Sverke, 2003).

Job Insecurity has been conceptualised as a global or a multidimensional concept and a job stressor (Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999). In most cases, Job Insecurity has been defined in terms of the global viewpoint, suggesting the threat of job loss or job discontinuity (Caplan, Cobb, French, van Harrison & Pinneau, 1980). The multidimensional definition of Job Insecurity holds that it refers not only to the affective level of the measure of uncertainty that an employee feels about his or her job continuity (fear of job loss), but also on a cognitive level to the continuity of certain dimensions of the job (job certainty) (Borg & Elizur, 1992; Mauno & Kinnunen, 2002). Sharing the same view De Witte (2005) adds that the definition of Job Insecurity must include the assumption that Job Insecurity is a stressor, made up of the cognitive prospects of losing a job and the affective experience of the concern thereof. However, researchers who followed the multidimensional definition of Job Insecurity, are of the opinion that besides referring to uncertainty, Job Insecurity is also associated with the continuity of certain dimensions of the job, for example opportunities for promotion (Ashford, Lee, & Bobko 1989; Borg & Elizur, 1992; Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996).

In the view of Jacobson (1991), an additional difference to the multidimensionality of Job Insecurity is the assumption that Job Insecurity has a cognitive and an affective quality. Cognitive Job Insecurity relates to the perceived likelihood of job loss (thinking about job loss), whereas affective Job Insecurity relates to fear of job loss (emotions regarding job loss) De Witte (2000). According to De Witte (2000), perceptions of Job Insecurity start with a cognitive appraisal of the future situation, which triggers emotions based on the meaning connected to the potential job loss, or the loss of job features.

Van Wyk (2007) mention that most studies done in South Africa on the topic of Job Insecurity were carried out from this perspective, and found that individuals who cognitively persuade themselves of the possibility to lose their jobs also react emotionally on this

cognition. De Witte (1999) mentions that Job Insecurity relates to people in their work situation who fear they might lose their jobs and end up unemployed. Hartley et al. (1991) in addition define job security as a differentiation between the level of security people experience and the level they might prefer. Consequently Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) define Job Insecurity as powerlessness to uphold desired continuity in a threatened job state.

Job Insecurity may also be viewed as being an objective or subjective phenomenon, as possessing both cognitive and affective qualities which may be accompanied by fear concerning the continuity of one's job or job features (Newcombe, 1999). Van Vuuren (1999) conceptualises Job Insecurity as the concern felt by an individual regarding the continued existence of his or her job and identifies three components namely, a subjective experience or perception, uncertainty about the future and doubts concerning the continuation of a job. According to Ashford et al. (1989) there are individual and background factors predicting Job Insecurity, i.e. antecedents. In line with this view Sverke, Hellgren & Nässwall, (2006) argue that the phenomenon of Job Insecurity can be understood by considering studies investigating potential antecedents of Job Insecurity. Ashford et al. (1989), Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) have identified two potential antecedents of Job Insecurity namely, role conflict and role ambiguity. Role conflict occurs when multiple demands from different sources create uncertainty in employees, while role ambiguity describes a lack of clarity concerning duties, authority, and responsibility on the job.

De Witte (2005) categorises antecedents into three levels of antecedents namely a macro level (organisational and national), individual background characteristics (age, gender, term of service), and personality traits. From the individual characteristics, age is one factor that may affect the interpretation of cues in the environment as posing a threat of job loss. Gender may play a role in how a person prepares for different occurrences throughout life. Several studies, focusing on how gender influences perceptions of job uncertainty, found that men are inclined to report higher levels of Job Insecurity as compared to women since they are traditionally the breadwinners of their families (Kinnunen et al., 2000; Rosenblatt, Talmud, & Ruvio, 1999; Sverke et al., 2004). Possessing a certain type of employment contract can also influence how individuals perceive their Job Insecurity (Sverke et al., 2004). Employees who are hired on full-time or permanent contracts may experience less Job Insecurity (De Witte, 1999; Feather & Rauter, 2004).

According to Van Wyk, (2007), not much research to determine or measure the antecedents of Job Insecurity was found. Näswall and De Witte (2003) also emphasise that there is a dearth of global research that focuses on the possible antecedents of Job Insecurity. Van Wyk (2007) further stated that South African studies omitted or did not examine the South African political and/or economical background, but adopted the postulation that these should be significant role-playing factors from international studies. Further research with regards to antecedents of Job Insecurity is suggested in order to have fair comparison.

Tjeku (2006) support the notion of Näswall and De Witte (2003) that Job Insecurity, like any other job related stressor, is associated with a number of detrimental consequences for both the individual and the organisation. Chirumbolo and Hellgren, (2003) as well as De Witte, (1999) offer consequences of Job Insecurity and these can be classified as both short and long-term consequences for individuals and/or organisations. Instinctively, one would expect feelings of Job Insecurity to have a strong psychological impact on those affected (Sauer, 2003; Sverke et al., 2006). Employment provides a means of income, socialising, and opportunities for personal growth, as well as a more structured life for employees (Jahoda, 1992). Whenever employees feel that their needs are threatened by perceived insecure work situations, they are also experiencing a threat to critical economic, social, and personal aspects of their lives (De Witte, 1999). Individuals need to have a sense of job security and want to believe that organisations will not make unfair decisions about their employment (De Witte, 1999; Sverke et al., 2004). They wish to be protected against stressors which could hinder their well-being or work performance (De Witte, 1999; Newcombe, 1999; Sverke et al., 2004).

Psychological Empowerment

In order for organisations to succeed in today's international business environment they must possess the knowledge, ideas, energy, and creativity of every employee, from front line workers to the top level management in the executive suite (Spreitzer, 1995). O'Toole and Lawler (2006) assert that successful organisations achieve this by empowering their employees to take initiative by themselves, as well as serving the collective interests of the organisation without being micro-managed, and to act as if they own the business. According to Spreitzer (2005) empowerment allows employees to take part in decision-making, assisting them in breaking out of stagnant mindsets, to take a risk and endeavour to try something new.

A number of organisations have adopted some kind of empowerment initiative for at least part of their labour force to achieve this goal (Lawler, Mohrman & Benson, 2001). According to Ford and Fottler (1995), empowerment requires managers to share information and knowledge that enables employees to contribute optimally to organisational performance. Short and Rinehart (1992) identify six dimensions of teacher empowerment namely decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact.

Empowerment from the social-structural perspective is about the distribution of power, implying formal power or control over organisational resources through the delegation of responsibility throughout the organisational chain of authority (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). While the main aim of empowerment is typically to improve the economic performance of the workplace, research has also identified its benefits to the individual employee (it makes workers feel that they are very important to the success of the organisation, it also builds commitment and creates a sense of belonging; empowered people join in creating their own destiny; employee empowerment increases organisational effectiveness and employee well-being) (Greasley, Bryman, Price, Soetanto & King, 2005; Ongori, 2009). Psychological Empowerment is conceptualised as a mindset that workers have about their organisation instead of something that management does to them (Dee, Henkin & Duemer, 2003). Relative to other constructs, Psychological Empowerment in contrast has received comparatively less attention (Dee et al., 2003).

Psychological Empowerment matters to both employees and the entire organisation (Spreitzer & Doneson, 2005). Empowered employees experience a more positive attitude in terms of job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson & McGrath, 2004). When low level hospitality employees felt empowered, they tended to show more promotion satisfaction and fewer propensities to leave the organisation. According to Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) empowered employees regard themselves as more effective in their work and are assessed as more effective by their colleagues.

Spreitzer (1995) distinguishes between two classic empowerment approaches namely, Social-Structural Empowerment and Psychological Empowerment. Social-Structural Empowerment is a more macro approach and focuses on the contextual conditions that enable empowerment in the workplace (Spreitzer, 1995). Psychological Empowerment is a more micro orientation and focuses on the psychological experience of empowerment at work (Spreitzer, 1995). In

the motivation approach as pioneered by Conger and Kanungo (1988), empowerment was conceptualised as psychological enabling. Conger and Kanungo (1988: 474) defined empowerment as “a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organisational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness, and through their removal by both formal organisational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information”. These researchers believe that empowerment is an emerging construct used by theorists to explain organisational effectiveness.

According to Dimitriades and Maroudas (2007) empowerment has been discussed in the literature at the organisational, team and individual level of analysis. At the individual level Dimitriades and Maroudas (2007) mentioned that empowerment is classified into two broad categories which are the structural approach (relational approach) and the motivational approach (Psychological Empowerment). In line with these two approaches Tymon (1988) identified a third approach which is leadership. For the purpose of this research the focus will be on the Psychological Empowerment.

Menon (2001) defines Psychological Empowerment as a cognitive state characterised by a sense of perceived control, competence and goal internalisation. Menon (2001) also emphasizes that the psychological state of the employee is more relevant to the success or failure of the empowerment initiative than to the fundamental nature of empowerment as experienced by the employee. Spreitzer's (1995) model, based on the Thomas and Velthouse (1990) approach, defines Psychological Empowerment as increased intrinsic motivation appearing in four cognitions namely meaning (value of work goal or purpose), competence (self-efficacy), self-determination (autonomy in initiation and continuation of work behaviour), and impact (influence on work outcomes).

In the view of Thomas and Velthouse (1990) as well as Spreitzer (1995) *meaningfulness* describes the extent to which an individual intrinsically attach value to a given task. Liden and Sparrow (2000) mentioned that of the four empowerment cognitions, the strongest theoretical argument for a positive relation to work satisfaction has been made for meaning. *Competence* is the degree to which an individual believes in his/her capacity to perform task activities skillfully (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Menon (2001) mentioned that individuals are of the impression that they can successfully meet routine task demands as well as non-routine challenges that might come up. Based on

this, Menon (2001) perceive competence as signifying self-efficacy and confidence with regard to role demands.

Impact is “the degree to which behaviour is seen as making a difference in terms of accomplishing the purpose of the task” (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990, p. 672). In the view of Spreitzer (1995: 1443-1444) impact is “the degree to which an individual can influence strategic, administrative or operating outcomes at work”.

Choice or self-determination (Spreitzer, 1995) involves a sense of independence and responsibility in executing a given task (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Self-determination refers to one’s sense of control and autonomy (Spreitzer, 1995). Menon (2001) asserted that people have the freedom to choose, that the physical environment is driven by feelings, circumstances and conditions, and that behaviour reflects the importance of perceived control for Psychological Empowerment.

According to Spreitzer (1995) and Bandura (1989) the four dimensions jointly indicate an active, rather than a passive, orientation to a work function. By active orientation it implies an orientation in which an employee wishes and feels able to shape his or her work function or context. Bhatnagar (2005) further mentioned that these dimensions merge additively to create a total construct of Psychological Empowerment. Spreitzer, Kizilos and Nason (1997) state that an individual needs to experience all four components of empowerment for both the personal and organisational benefits to occur. (Spreitzer, 1995) also concurs with the latter by adding that the lack of any single cognition will reduce, though not totally eliminate, the overall extent of empowerment.

In line with this, research shows that when school teams are appropriately supported by management, it created an environment where educators can work together to solve difficult problems, share responsibilities and learn new skills (Dee & Henkin, 2001). Empowering work environments seem to improve professionalism, facilitate employee leadership, improve the quality of work life and enable effective implementation of school transformation (Dee, et al., 2003). Empowerment characterises the educators' relationship with an organisation (school). It appears that empowerment enhances educators' commitment to the school (Dee & Henkin, 2001). Consequently the support from management increases the trust-building practice, result in strengthened organisational commitment (Nyhan, 2000).

Menon (2001) points out that if Psychological Empowerment is considered a psychological state, it provides a mediating link between empowering acts and employee outcomes such as satisfaction, involvement (decision making) and organisational commitment. Empowered employees have the power to make decisions that fit within the scope and domain of their work. The lack of access to “power tools” such as opportunity, information, support, and resources impedes educators to advance their ability within their career (Kanter, 1997). As a consequence of their own participation in a school’s decision-making process, empowered educators assume more responsibility, have improved drive, and created better solutions to the problems they come across (Kanter, 1997).

Work Engagement

In the view of Jackson and Rothmann (2005) Work Engagement is taken as an antecedent to organisational commitment in that employees who experience deep engagement in their work situation identify with their organisation. Consequently, May, Gilson and Harter (2004) postulate that, in order for the human spirit to flourish at work, employees must be able to engage themselves cognitively, emotionally and physically. In their research, Schaufeli and Bakker (2002) view engagement as a new trend that broadens the traditional concept and scope that emerged in burnout research. Researchers broadened their interest to encompass the positive pole of an employee’s well-being (engagement), rather than solely focusing on the negative pole (burnout). Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzáles-Romá and Bakker (2002) consider burnout and engagement to be opposite concepts that should be measured independently with different instruments.

Work Engagement is defined as an energetic condition in which an employee is devoted to excellent performance at work and is certain of his or her effectiveness (Schutte, Toppinen, Kalimo & Schaufeli, 2000). Schaufeli et al. (2002) as well as Bakker and Demerouti (2008) define Work Engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by *vigour*, *dedication*, and *absorption*.

Vigour is characterised by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, as well as willingness to exert effort and to persist even through difficult times. *Dedication* refers to being strongly involved in one’s work and experiencing a sense of significance, eagerness, motivation, pride and commitment (Schaufeli et al., 2002). *Absorption* is described by being

completely concentrated and happily absorbed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Schaufeli, et al., 2002). According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), absorption includes focused concentration, a clear mind, mind- and body unity, unforced concentration, complete control, loss of self-consciousness, deformation of time, and inner joy.

Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, (2001) further mention that a greater match between the person and six domains which are (sustainable workload, feelings of control, proper recognition and rewards, a supportive work community, fairness, and meaningful and appreciated work) of his or her job environment can increase the prospect of Work Engagement.

Engaged employees who are perceived to have high levels of energy are enthusiastic and often fully immersed in their work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; May et al., 2004). Bakker and Demerouti (2008) stipulate that engaged employees perform better as compared to their non-engaged counterparts because of the following four reasons: they often experience positive feelings (happiness, joy, and enthusiasm); they experience improved health; they generate their own job- and personal resources; and transfer their engagement to others. It is thus evident, based on the aforementioned reasons that engaged employees bring about positive results in their employing organisation (Saks, 2006). In line with this notion research has found engaged employees to be related to good health and positive work influence (Sonnentag, 2003).

General Health

Perceived Job Insecurity and powerlessness in the workplace is detrimental to employees' well-being as it results in reduced psychological well-being characterised by factors such as strain-related psychosomatic complaints, anxiety, irritation and depression (Bizumic, Reynolds, Turner, Bromhead & Subasic, 2009; Catalano et al., 1986; Yousef, 1998). Extensive research has been dedicated to the study of potentially detrimental consequences of occupational stress on psychological wellbeing (Ho, 1996). In the view of Wissing and van Eeden (2002) variables such as age, gender and ethnic/cultural context also influence the symptoms of psychological well-being. Current trends in the work environment may also

affect employee health through different pathways (Chirumbolo & Hellegren, 2003; Landsbergis, 2003). According to Sverke and Hellgren, (2002) as well as Way and McNeil, (2006) individual employees will react differently to the gradually changing characteristics of employment conditions and jobs (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005).

Brodsky (1988) also identified various antecedents of psychological well-being, amongst others stress, physical health, work, career path, and work environment. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) stipulate that the level of stress people experience depends on their assessments of the degree of threat to their physical and/or psychological well-being in their environments and their beliefs about the likelihood of being able to counteract the negative consequences of the threats in their environments (Bizumic et al., 2009; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stress is jointly and interactively determined by people's primary appraisal which refers to the perception of threat, and their secondary appraisal which refers to the perception of control. Stress is experienced most intensely when people encounter stimuli that they perceive to threaten their well-being, particularly when they believe that they will be unable to counteract. Sverke et al. (2004) note that in terms of the stress theories, a stressor is considered to be the result of some type of strain reaction, with consequences for the health and well-being of the individual, as well as for the individual's work-related attitudes and behaviour.

Research on well-being has been directed by two general viewpoints: the hedonic approach that describes health in terms of enjoyment and pleasure as well as the eudaimonic approach, which focuses on self-realisation, personal expressiveness and the level to which people can actualise their abilities (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The eudaimonic perspective describes well-being as "the striving for perfection that represents the realisation of one's true potential" (Ryff 1995:100). Brodsky (1988) mentioned that psychological well-being can be identified by the following characteristics: being subjective and emotional; it is a condition as opposed to a continuous part of who we are; it is a product of personal endeavor; and lastly it is more than the absence of negative influence and personal conflict, but comes from moving towards preferred life goals.

Psychological well-being is described by researchers as a complex construct consisting of various dimensions such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, and self-acceptance (Ryff, 2003). Bizumic et al. (2009) purports that

well-being includes positive features such as self-esteem, positive affect, and job involvement. These researchers indicated the negative aspects such as depression, loss of emotional control, as well as aggressive and disruptive behaviour. In the view of O'Donnell (2000) the psychological aspect of the work situation that contributes to employees' well-being has received less attention as compared to physical hazards of work and the work situation. In line with these predictions the "positive psychology" movement has created a great deal of studies focusing on the measurement and associates of positive psychological characteristics in reaction to the traditional focus of psychological and social psychological research on negative aspects of mental health (Gropp, Geldenhuys & Visser, 2007; Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005; Wissing & van Eeden, 2002). Karasek and Theorell (1990) mentioned that such research can only be considered if the identified ill health can be shown to be independent of the workers' characteristics including physiological and personal aspects.

The Constitution of the World Health Organisation (2000), defines General Health as a condition of absolute physical, social and mental well-being; it is not simply the absence of disease or ill-health. In this research, General Health is conceptualised by the theory of Goldberg and Hillier (1979) which identifies four concepts, namely:

- The first concept is Somatic Symptoms, also known as Somatisation disorder. It is a psychiatric state marked by multiple medically unexplained physical or Somatic Symptoms (Barlow & Durand, 2005; Carson, Butcher & Mineka, 1996). This refers to individuals' complaints about serious health conditions that interfere significantly with their capacity to perform important activities, such as work, school or family and social responsibilities, or lead the person experiencing the symptoms to look for medical treatment (Barlow & Durand, 2005; Carson et al., 1996).
- The second one is Anxiety and Insomnia which will be discussed respectively since they have a reciprocal relationship (Denver, 2005). Anxiety is described as a negative mood condition characterised by bodily symptoms of physical tension and worry about the future (Barlow & Durand, 2005). Insomnia is classified into three categories namely, individuals who find it incredibly difficult to get to sleep in the first place (primary insomnia); individuals who wake up multiple times at the night and struggle to get back to sleep (middle insomnia); and those who wake up very early and are not able to get back to sleep at all (terminal insomnia) (Barlow & Durand, 2005; Carson

et al., 1996). At any rate or category, Insomnia is extremely debilitating, leaving an individual feeling tired, anxious and emotionally unstable, impairing his/her ability to react creatively and appropriately to every day situations. It can affect a person's relationships, work life, business, and physical health (Barlow & Durand, 2005; Carson et al., 1996). The major causes of Insomnia include the psychological factors amongst others are stress, anxiety and depression; physical factors such as pain, hormone changes or any number of medical conditions; and temporary factors such as disturbed sleep patterns, excessive use of caffeine or other stimulants, or a drastic change in one's situation (Barlow & Durand, 2005; Carson et al., 1996).

- The third being Social Dysfunction, there is a dearth of research from the behavioural-functionalist point of view with regard to this concept. Social Dysfunction is considered as a diagnostic feature of schizophrenic disorders, but its definition lacks validity (Barlow & Durand, 2005). Based on that, researchers from the clinical-functionalist school of thought prefer using the term *disability* since the term 'Social Dysfunction' leads to a strictly behavioural-functionalist way of seeing things.
- Lastly Severe Depression, just as the name suggests, is the most serious condition (Barlow & Durand, 2005; Carson et al., 1996). Severe Depression affects every day life, leading to hopeless feelings and even loss of desire to live altogether (Barlow & Durand, 2005; Carson et al., 1996). It affects the patient's ability to work, study, sleep, eat and lead a normal life (Barlow & Durand, 2005; Carson et al., 1996). The individual will lose his or her appetite, and feel a constant lack of energy and the ability to enjoy any activity (including work) that he/she used to enjoy in the past.

Studies of the education profession specify that teaching may be one of the most stressful of all occupations, followed by air traffic controllers and surgeons (Ho, 1996; Jackson, Rothmann & van de Vijver, 2006). In South Africa, research indicates a number of health factors such as Somatic Symptoms, Severe Depression and stress amongst educators (Jackson et al., 2006; Mofokeng, 2007). A nationwide investigation done on stress among educators in the United Kingdom found a number of them to be indicating stress-related manifestations which were far higher than those of the population norms and other similar occupational groups (Cox & Brockley, 1984).

Relationship between Job Insecurity, Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment and General Health.

Menon (2001) indicates that the psychological state of the employee is more relevant to the success or failure of the empowerment initiative than the fundamental nature of empowerment as experienced by the individual employee. Researchers concur that perceived powerlessness (lack of Psychological Empowerment) is certainly an important variable in the study of Job Insecurity (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). In support of the foregoing information researchers found a practically significant negative correlation of medium effect between total Job Insecurity and total Psychological Empowerment (Moeletsi, 2003; Reynders, 2005).

De Witte (2005) found that Job Insecurity is negatively related to Work Engagement. This is supported by Bosman (2005) and Reynders (2005) in their research done in a South African government organisation. They have found a practically significant negative relationship between Job Insecurity and Work Engagement. Thinane (2005) found Job Insecurity to be practically significantly related to decreased levels of Work Engagement. In the recent study conducted in South African selected organisations Stander (2007) found a significant negative association between Job Insecurity and Work Engagement.

Job Insecurity reduces the well-being of individuals, consequently a lower level of psychological well-being was found amongst those who felt insecure about their jobs (Burchell 1994; De Witte, 2000). Roksies and Louis-Guerin (1990) as well as Hallier and Lyon (1996) maintain that researchers have conceived Job Insecurity as the person's subjective appraisal of the risks and consequences of future job loss. Job Insecurity is related to major negative consequences at organisational and individual level resulting in more psychological distress and lower organisational commitment (Probst, 2002). Therefore, in spite of the objective danger, the inception of psychological stress will follow from the individual's assessment of the situation as threatening (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2005; Feather & Rauter, 2004).

Research has consistently found Job Insecurity to be linked to impaired employee well-being. In addition, physical health problems and mental distress increase proportionately with the level of Job Insecurity (Ashford et al., 1989; Hartely, Jacobson, Klandermans, & Van

Vuuren, 1991; Lim, 1996). An analysis of data retrieved from a Canadian National probability sample conducted in 1994 shows that high levels of Job Insecurity are linked to lower self-rated health and increased distress (McDonough, 2000). In a South African study, within a government organisation, Viljoen (2004) found that Job Insecurity is associated with increased Somatic Symptoms, Social Dysfunction, Anxiety/Insomnia and Severe Depression. Grant (2005) similarly found Job Insecurity to be practically significantly related to Somatic Symptoms, Anxiety, Insomnia, and Social Dysfunction; however, not with Severe Depression. Selepe, (2004) in her study also reported that perceived Job Insecurity impacts negatively on employee well-being.

Employees' willingness to exert effort in the workplace is an important and desirable consequence of creating an environment that provide access to a structure that empower them to do their work well (Chiang & Jang, 2008). Kanter (1997) suggested that in order to be empowering, organisations must make information available through a number of devices. Drawing from that notion Kouzes and Posner (1987) agree that without information you can be certain that people will not extend themselves to take responsibility or utter their creative energies (engagement).

Psychological Empowerment dimensions are taken to be collectively playing a role in producing the proactive spirit of employee empowerment whereby meaning serves as the "engine" of empowerment, entailing the mechanism through which individuals become vigorous about work (Spreitzer et al., 1997). Meaningless work is often associated with apathy and detachment from one's work (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). May et al. (2004) mentioned that lack of meaning in one's work can lead to alienation or disengagement from one's work. Stander (2007) reported a practically significant positive correlation between Psychological Empowerment and Work Engagement, implying that increased levels of Psychological Empowerment are associated with higher levels of Work Engagement. He further reported both meaning and impact as predictors of Work Engagement. Meaning was found to be the strongest predictor.

Hochwalder and Brucefors (2005) mentioned in their research that the theoretical as well as the empirical findings indicate a negative relationship between Psychological Empowerment and ill health. These researchers found a significant negative association between the four empowerment dimensions with all four dimensions of the General Health Questionnaire.

Meaning is considered as a main protective factor against ill health (Antonovsky, 1987). Competence was found to result in improved ability to deal with demands and is therefore a preventive factor against ill health (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Self-determination is viewed as a form of autonomy which is instrumental in reducing strain (Spreitzer et al., 1997). Impact is viewed as the converse of learned helplessness and thus a shield against ill health (Seligman, 1975; Spreitzer et al., 1997).

Bakker and Demerouti, (2006) mentioned that research suggests that Work Engagement is positively associated with health, and this would imply that engaged employees are better able to perform well. Schaufeli et al. (2001) revealed that engaged workers report less psychosomatic complaints than their non-engaged colleagues. Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli, (2001) similarly found moderate negative correlations between engagement (vigour) and psychosomatic health complaints (e.g. headaches, chest pain). In their study among Finnish teachers Hakanen, Bakker and Schaufeli (2006), show that Work Engagement is positively related to self-related health and workability. Sonnentag, (2003) found engaged employees to be related to good health and positive work influence.

Based on the above relationships research has found Job Insecurity to be related to a decrease in General Health and Work Engagement (Burchell 1994; De Witte, 2000; Probst, 2002). Psychological Empowerment is conceptualised as a state that holds both individual and organisational benefits, including General Health and Work Engagement (Greasley et al., 2004; Hochwalder & Brucefors, 2005). It has however been found that Psychological Empowerment may decline due to feelings of Job Insecurity. For this reason it is perceived that Psychological Empowerment may play a mediating role in a stressor-strain relationship, such as Job Insecurity impact on Work Engagement (Britt, Adler, & Bartone, 2001), and General Health (Hochwalder & Brucefors, 2005).

School educators are among those professionals who experience the highest levels of job stress (Cano-Garcia, Padilla-Muñoz, & Carrasco-Ortiz, 2005; Hakanen et al., 2006; Stoeber & Rennert, 2008; Verhoeven et al., 2003). Lack of employee empowerment in organisations and schools is considered as a stressor to the individual and members of the team (Ongori, 2009; Seed, 2007). In contrast, according to the survey made in Alabama, educators were generally reported to feel empowered and engaged in education decision-making. Based on this, the objective of this research is to investigate the relationship between Job Insecurity,

Psychological Empowerment, and Work Engagement as well General Health among educators in a specific part of the Vaal Triangle. Based on the above discussion the focus of this study will firstly focus on the role of Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment in predicting Work Engagement. Secondly, the focus will be on the role of Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment in predicting General Health.

In the light of the major objectives of this study, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: A significant relationship exists between Job Insecurity, Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment and General Health of Educators in Sedibeng West District.

H2: Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict Work Engagement of Educators in Sedibeng West District.

H3: Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict Somatic Symptoms of Educators in Sedibeng West District.

H4: Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict Social Dysfunction of Educators in Sedibeng West District.

H5: Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predicts Severe Depression of Educators in Sedibeng West District.

H6: Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict Anxiety and Insomnia of Educators in Sedibeng West District.

METHOD

Research design

A cross-sectional survey design was used to reach the research objectives. This design can be used to assess interrelationships among variables at one point in time, without any planned intervention (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997). Since no intervention is planned, a correlation design will be utilised (Huysamen, 1993). This design is ideally suitable and applicable when the aim of the study is predictive and descriptive in nature (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997).

Participants

The participants can be defined as an available sample of educators in Sedibeng West-District. A total population of ± 500 educators was targeted. A response rate of 61, 8 % was achieved, of which 309 responses could be utilised. These educators were from primary,

secondary and private schools. The Sedibeng West District consists of schools from Evaton, Sebokeng, Bophelong, Boipatong and Vanderbijlpark. Descriptive information of the sample is given in Table 1.

Table 1 indicates that 54 % of the study population represented the white cultural group. Seventy-one percent females participated in this study. In terms of age the largest group (37%) of participants fell between the age of 36 years to 45 years and 43% had certified at diploma and occupational certificate level of education. 84% percent of the participants are in permanent contract. The majority of the study population has been employed by the department for the periods of between eleven and twenty years (33%) and longer than twenty years (31%). The above is a good representation of the schools that participated.

Measuring instruments

The following measuring instruments were used in the empirical study for the purpose of this research namely Job Insecurity Questionnaire (JIQ), Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire (MEQ), Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and General Health Questionnaire (GHQ28). A biographical questionnaire was developed to gather information about the demographical characteristics of the participants. Information such as age, gender, race, education, and years employed was gathered.

The *Job Insecurity Questionnaire (JIQ)* (De Witte, 2000) was primarily developed to measure employee's feelings towards Job Insecurity. The Job Insecurity Questionnaire is an 11 item questionnaire, which measures the perceived Job Insecurity of the participants (De Witte, 2000). The items have both cognitive and affective dimensions of Job Insecurity and are arranged along a five-point Likert scale with 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. According to de Witte (2000), the questionnaire items refer to cognitive assessments (the possibility of becoming unemployed) and emotional reaction (affective insecurity). An example of a question relating to cognitive Job Insecurity would be, "I think that I will be able to continue working here", whereas an example of a question relating to affective Job Insecurity would be, "I fear that I might lose my job". In his research, De Witte, (2000) has reported a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,92 for global Job Insecurity.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Participants (N = 309)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male (1)	85	27.4
	Female (2)	221	71.3
	Missing (3)	4	1.3
Cultural Group	Black (1)	132	42.6
	White (2)	166	53.5
	Coloured (3)	7	2.3
	Missing (5)	5	1.6
Home Language	Afrikaans (1)	163	52.6
	English (2)	8	2.6
	Pedi (3)	12	3.9
	Sesotho (4)	71	22.9
	SiSwati (5)	1	.3
	IsiZulu (7)	21	6.8
	IsiNdebele (8)	3	1.0
	IsiXhosa (9)	13	4.2
	XiTsonga (10)	1	.3
	Other (11)	9	2.9
	Missing	8	2.6
Age	24 years and younger (1)	4	1.2
	25 – 35 years (2)	61	19.7
	36 – 45 years (3)	114	36.9
	46 – 55 years (4)	85	27.5
	56 years and older (5)	29	9.1
	Missing	17	5.5
Marital Status	Single/widow/widower (1)	48	15.5
	Living together/life partner(2)	21	6.8
	Married(3)	203	65.5
	Divorced(4)	30	9.7
	Separated(5)	5	1.6
	Remarried (6)	3	1.0
Highest Qualification	Diploma/occupational certificate (1)	133	42.9
	First Degree (2)	87	28.1
	Higher Degree and Post-graduate (3)	82	26.5
	Missing	8	2.6
Job Level	Management (people reporting to you) (1)	84	27.1
	Non Management	215	69.4
	Missing	11	3.5
Years of service	Less than 1 yr (1)	8	2.5
	2-5 yrs (2)	26	8.4
	6-10yrs (3)	42	13.5
	11-20yrs (4)	103	33.3
	Longer than 20yrs (5)	96	30.9
Type of Contract	Missing	35	11.3
	Permanent (1)	259	83.5
	Temporary (2)	19	6.1
	Fixed term contract (3)	31	10.0
	Missing	1	.3
Union	Yes (1)	263	84.8
	No (2)	46	14.8
	Missing	1	.3

Furthermore, De Witte has found that the overlap between both predictive factors (cognitive and affective) is significant, making it difficult to distinguish between the two dimensions. In South African research, Heymans (2002) has obtained a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,81 for the total scale and Bosman (2005) has obtained an alpha coefficient of 0,70 for the cognitive job insecurity scale and 0,72 for the affective Job Insecurity scale. For total Job Insecurity Thinane (2005) obtained alpha coefficient of 0,89, Ngwenya (2006) 0,84 and Stander (2007) 0,70.

The *Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire (MEQ)* (Spreitzer, 1995) was used. Spreitzer (1995) constructed this instrument after collecting extensive data to provide insight into personal conceptualisation of empowerment. The four dimensions that emerged were meaning; competence; self-determination; and impact. Spreitzer's 12-item instrument consists of three items assessing each dimension of empowerment. The scale provide responses from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree. The first dimension of empowerment, "Meaning" is defined by Thomas and Velthouse (1990, p.668) as "the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards". The second dimension, Competence, is concerned with "an individual's belief in his or her capacity to perform activities with skill" (Spreitzer, 1995:1443). The third dimension, Self-determination, focuses on an individual's sense of having a choice in initiating and regulating actions (Deci, Connell & Ryan, 1989). The fourth dimension, Impact, refers to the extent to which an individual can influence outcomes at work (Ashforth, 1989). Evidence supporting both convergent and discriminant validity for these dimensions of empowerment have been reported. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for four dimensions of empowerment ranged from 0.79 to 0.88. Stander and Rugg (2001) reported a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,84. Saure (2003) in the steel manufacturing environment found an overall Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,92. In another study conducted within a packaging environment, Moeletsi (2003) reported overall internal consistency of 0,93. Examination of the empowerment gestalt via confirmatory analysis indicated that the four dimensions of empowerment were first-order factors. Second-order confirmatory factor analysis provided empirical justification for creation of the overall empowerment scale using the four components dimension. Overall fit statistics showed a goodness of fit value of 0.93 (Spreitzer, 1992, 1995). All the scales have been found to be valid for the South African context.

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)* (Schaufeli et al., 2002) was used to measure Work Engagement. This 17-item questionnaire is arranged along a seven-point frequency scale, ranging from 0 = never to 6 = daily. The UWES has three scales, namely vigour (6 items), dedication (5 items), and absorption (6 items). Examples of items relating to the three dimensions are the following: "I am bursting with energy in my work" (vigour) (Schaufeli et al., 2002:88-90); "I find my work full of meaning and purpose" (dedication) (Schaufeli et al., 2002:88-90); and "When I am working, I forget everything around me" (absorption) (Schaufeli et al., 2002:88-90). High levels of vigour, dedication and absorption point to an individual who experiences a high level of Work Engagement. Regarding internal consistency, Cronbach coefficients have been determined between 0,68 and 0,91 (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Storm (2002) has obtained alpha coefficients of 0,78 (vigour), 0,89 (dedication) and 0,78 (absorption) for the UWES in a sample of 2 396 members of the South African Police Services. Coetzer (2004) in sample of employees of an insurance company found high alpha coefficients. Moeletsi (2003) reported overall internal consistency of 0,93.

The *General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)* was designed by Goldberg and Hillier (1979) to measure psychological well-being. The original version of GHQ consisted of 140 items. However a shortened 28-item version was later developed, which will be used in this study. These 28 items are divided into 4 subscales, which are: somatic symptoms (SS), measured by the first 7 items of the scale; anxiety and insomnia (AS), measured by item 8 to 14, social dysfunction (SD), measured by item 15 to 21; and Severe Depression (SD) measured by items 22 to 28. This is a four-point scale where the individual indicates the level at which he/she had experienced the symptoms for the past few weeks. A low score of 0-4 is a possible indication of positive mental health, whilst higher scores 5-28 are indicative of a more negative state of mental health (Goldberg & Hillier, 1979). Ferrie (1997) as well as Heaney, Israel & House, (1994) reported effects of Job Insecurity and parameters such as increased blood pressure levels were found in a number of longitudinal studies.

Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out with the help of the SPSS program (SPSS Institute, 2006). Construct validity was determined by using the following procedure:

- Principal component analysis, using the eigenvalues and the scree plot

- Principal axis factoring, using Direct Oblimin Rotation.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used to assess the internal consistencies of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995).

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviations, outliers, skewness and kurtosis) were computed for each item of the JIQ, UWES, PE and GHQ. The statistical significance of the skewness and kurtosis of each item of the measuring instruments was assessed by translating the values to z-scores. Because of the skewness of some measures the z-scores were obtained by dividing the values of skewness and kurtosis by the respective standard errors thereof. Values were regarded as statistically significant if they were higher than 1,96 ($p < 0,05$). A log transformation [$\log (X_i)$] was used to transform positively skewed data (Field, 2005). This transformation squashes the right tail of the distribution. In cases where scales included 0-values a constant was added to the data before the transformation [$\log (X_i + 1)$]. In cases of negatively skew data scores were reversed before the transformation was done.

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to specify the relationship between variables. The level of statistical significance is set at $p < 0,01$ and the effect sizes were computed to assess the practical significance of the relationships. A cut-off point of 0,30, which represents a medium effect, is set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients (Steyn, 2002).

Regression analyses were carried out to determine the percentage variance in the dependent variable which was predicted by the independent variables. The square of correlation was also determined to indicate the proportion of variance in any two variables, which was predicted by the variance in the other (Cohen, 1988).

The VIF score indicates whether there is collinearity in the data (Field, 2005). Field provides the following guidelines:

- If the largest VIF is greater than 1 there is cause for concern
- If the average VIF is substantially greater than 1, the regression may be biased

Tolerance below 0,1 indicates a serious problem, and below 0,2 indicates a potential problem.

RESULTS

An exploratory factor analysis was computed for the Job Insecurity Questionnaire to verify the construct validity of the components of the questionnaire. Analysis of eigenvalues (larger than 1) and the scree plot indicated that one factor, Job Insecurity, could be extracted, explaining 51, 6% of the total variance. After some items were removed Job Insecurity was measured by 8 items measuring affective job insecurity. From the literature most studies (De Witte, 2000; Jordaan, 2007; Sauer, 2003; Tjeku, 2006) confirm that Job Insecurity, as measured by the JIQ, has a two-factor structure, namely cognitive Job Insecurity and affective Job Insecurity. In a study made amongst educators Mofokeng (2007) supported the one factor structure. For the purpose of this study Job Insecurity was used as one factor structure.

An exploratory factor analysis was computed for the Measuring Empowerment Questionnaire to verify the construct validity of the components of the questionnaire. Table 2 presents the factor loading for the two factors that could be extracted, explaining 59% of the total variance. Self-determination and impact loaded as one factor as opposed to the original questionnaire of Spreitzer (1995). Items relating to Meaning and items relating to Competence loaded as a single factor. One item of Self determination (item 9) loaded wrongly and was removed from the analyses. This two factor structure is in line with the research of Hancer and George (2003) conducted amongst restaurant service employees. Hancer and George (2003) reported two factors namely Attitude (Meaning and Competence) and Influence (Self-determination and Impact). This two-factor structure was adopted in statistical analysis for the purpose of this study.

An exploratory factor analysis was computed for the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale to verify the construct validity of the components of the questionnaire. Analysis of eigenvalues (larger than 1) and the scree plot indicated that one factor could be extracted, explaining 58, 7% of the total variance. A one factor model of Work Engagement was measured by 17 items of the UWES. A number of South African studies also confirmed a one factor model of Work Engagement (Bosman, 2005; Brand, 2006; Jordaan, 2007).

Table 2

Factor Loading, Communalities (h^2) and Percentage Variance for Principal Components Extraction on Psychological Empowerment.

	Components		h^2
	1 (Influence)	2 (Attitude)	
1. I am confident about my ability to do my job	0,01	0,68	0,46
2. I have a great deal of control over what happens in my school	0,65	0,00	0,42
3. I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job	0,76	0,04	0,58
4. I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job	0,68	0,12	0,48
5. My job activities are personally meaningful to me	0,39	0,44	0,35
6. The work I do is very important to me	0,27	-0,17	0,27
7. I have significant influence over what happens in my school.	0,96	-0,18	0,56
8. My impact on what happens in my school is large	0,52	0,12	0,28
9. I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work	0,28	0,61	0,45
10. I have mastered the skills necessary for my job	-0,12	0,80	0,40
11. The work I do is meaningful to me	0,09	0,74	0,56
12. I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities	-0,04	0,83	0,69

An exploratory factor analysis was computed for the General Health Questionnaire to verify the construct validity of the components of the questionnaire. Analysis of eigenvalues (larger than 1) and the scree plot indicated that three factors could be extracted. Somatic symptoms and Anxiety loaded as one factor, while Social dysfunction and depression loaded separately (Somatic, Social and Depression) explaining 63, 4% of the total variance. Buys (2008) obtained similar results in her study conducted amongst ministers in South Africa. Most studies in South Africa loaded correctly on all four factors as suggested by the GHQ (Grant, 2005; Mofokeng, 2007; Rani, 2005; van Zyl 2005). The Somatic symptoms and Anxiety will be named Somatic Symptoms, while Social Dysfunction and Severe Depression will remain the same. The final questionnaire that was used consists of 28 items.

The descriptive statistics and Cronbach alpha coefficients of the instruments are presented in Table 3.

The internal consistencies of all the constructs were acceptable according to the guidelines of 0,70 as set by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). These results indicate high reliability of the instruments that is consistent with the findings of other research.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Alpha Coefficients of the Measuring Instruments

Component	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
Job Insecurity	2.16	0.72	0.61	0.39	0,85
Influence	5.19	1.15	0.80	0.95	0,86
Attitude	5.9	0.9	-1.33	1.71	0,86
Engagement	4.2	1.03	-0.78	0.20	0.94
Somatic	2.1	0.6	0.37	0.60	0,91
Social	2.06	0.5	0.44	0.37	0,85
Depression	1.51	0.61	1.47	1.72	0,88

The information in Table 3 indicates that the scores on all subscales have a normal distribution (skewness and kurtosis smaller than 1) with the exception of Attitude and Severe Depression.

A Chronbach's alpha coefficients of 0,85 were obtained for Job Insecurity. Using the Job Insecurity Questionnaire, Heymans (2002) obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0,84, while Sauer (2003) obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0,75 (0,83 for the cognitive scale and 0,85 for the affective scale). Stander (2007) obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0,65 for the cognitive subscale and 0,76 for the affective scale.

Regarding Work Engagement, a Chronbach's alpha coefficient of 0,94 was obtained. In line with this Bosman (2005) as well as Stander (2007) obtained similar results of a Cronbach's alpha coefficient on UWES, while Thinane (2005) obtain a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0,84. A Chronbach's alpha coefficient of 0,86 was obtained on both Influence and Attitude. Rugg (2001) found a Cronbach's alpha of 0,84. Laschinger (2001) obtained internal consistencies ranging between 0,87 and 0,92. Numerous other studies found similar results (Hancer, George & Kim, 2005; Tjeku, 2006). With regard to GHQ a Chronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0,85 of 0,91 were obtained, in the same range, Grant (2007) obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0,89. Van Zyl (2005) obtained 0,78 on Somatic Symptoms, 0,91 on Anxiety/insomnia, 0,77 on Social dysfunction and 0,91 on Severe Depression.

The correlation coefficients between JIQ, UWES, PE and GHQ were analysed and results are reported in Table 4.

Table 4

Correlation Coefficients between the Measuring Instruments.

Item	Job Insecurity	Influence	Attitude	Engagement	Somatic symptoms	Social dysfunction
Job Insecurity	-	-	-	-	-	-
Influence	-0.20*	-	-	-	-	-
Attitude	-0.21*	0.57††	-	-	-	-
Engagement	-0.04*	0.41†	0.57††	-	-	-
Somatic symptoms	0.16*	-0.22*	-0.22*	-0.27*	-	-
Social dysfunction	0.10*	-0.21*	-0.24*	-0.32†	0.53††	-
Severe depression	0.25*	-0.15*	-0.20*	-0.13*	0.50††	0.43†

Statistical significance: $p \leq 0.05$

† Correlation is practically significant $r \geq 0,30$ (medium effect)

†† Correlation is practically significant $r \geq 0,50$ (large effect)

Table 4 shows that no practically significant correlation coefficients were found between Job Insecurity and any of the other constructs. Job Insecurity was however found to be statistically significantly and negatively correlated to Influence and Attitude. Higher levels of Job Insecurity are therefore associated with lower levels of perceived Psychological Empowerment (as measured by Influence and Attitude). Tjeku (2006) as well as Moeletsi (2003) reported a practically significant negative correlation of medium effect between Job Insecurity and total Psychological Empowerment. Conversely, Reynders (2005) and Stander (2007) reported an insignificant correlation between Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment as well as its dimensions respectively. Moeletsi (2003) reported a practically significant negative correlation of medium effect between Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment. A statistically significant negative correlation was obtained between Job Insecurity and Work Engagement. This corresponds with the research of Thinane (2005), who reported a practically significant negative correlation of medium effect between Job

Insecurity and Work Engagement. Stander (2007) found that uncertainty about job continuity correlates negatively with Work Engagement.

A statistically significant correlation was obtained between Job Insecurity and three dimensions of General Health (Somatic Symptoms, Social Dysfunction and Depression). This implies that, when educators experience high levels of Job Insecurity their ability to perform important activities such as work and social responsibility. Grant (2005) also reported a practically significant relationship of medium effect between Job Insecurity and General Health.

A practically significant correlation of medium effect was obtained between Influence and Work Engagement as measured by the UWES. Feelings of empowerment result in employees having more positive attitudes in terms of their dedication at work as well as their work effort. Influence also shows statistically significant negative correlations with Somatic Symptoms, Social Dysfunction and Severe Depression. The Attitude factor obtained a practically significant correlation of large effect with Work Engagement and furthermore statistically negatively correlates with the three General Health Questionnaire factors, being Somatic Symptoms, Social Dysfunction and Severe Depression. Hochwalder and Brucefors (2005) confirm that empirical findings have indicated a negative relationship between Psychological Empowerment and ill health (GHQ). Sonnentag (2003) found that engaged employees tend to be healthier and have a more positive work influence.

A practically significant negative correlation of medium effect was obtained between Work Engagement and Social Dysfunction. Somatic Symptoms and Severe Depression showed a statistically significant correlation with Work Engagement. Hakanen et al. (2006), found a positive correlation between Work Engagement and self-reported health (General Health) in their study among Finnish teachers. Van Zyl (2005) found a statistically significant negative correlation between Work Engagement and two factors of General Health Questionnaire (Somatic Symptoms and Severe Depression), and a practically significant negative correlation of medium effect to Anxiety/Insomnia and Social Dysfunction. Based on the findings reported in this research, hypothesis 1, stating that a significant relationship exist between Job Insecurity, Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment and General Health, can therefore be accepted.

Next, multiple regression analyses were performed to test whether Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict Work Engagement (see Table 5).

Table 5

Regression Analysis with Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment as Independent Variables and Work Engagement as Dependent Variable

Model		Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	p	F	R	R ²	ΔR ²
		B	SE	Beta						
1							0,40	0,04	0,001	0,002
	(Constant)	73,42	3,14		23,36	0,00				
	Job Insecurity	- 0,13	0,20	-0,04	-0,64	0,53				
							52,37*	0,58	0,34	0,33
2	(Constant)	-0,46	6,44		-0,07	0,94				
	Job insecurity	0,34	0,17	0,10	2,05	0,04*				
	Influence	0,35	0,15	0,14	2,40	0,18				
	Attitude	1,57	0,18	0,51	8,87	0,00*				

* $p < 0,05$ – statistically significant

The results in Table 5 indicate that that affective Job Insecurity predicated 0,1% of the variance in Work Engagement scales ($F = 0,40$, $p \leq 0,05$, $R^2 = 0,001$). Van Greunen (2004) reported that 10% of the variance in Work Engagement is predicted by the two Job Insecurity subscales. However, the regression coefficient for affective Job Insecurity was not statistically significant. A statistically significant increase in the R^2 was obtained when the sub-scales of Psychological Empowerment were entered into the regression analysis ($F = 52,37$, $p < 0,05$, $\Delta R^2 = 0,33$). Job Insecurity, Attitude and Influence predicted 33% of the variance in Work Engagement, with Job Insecurity and Attitude being significant contributors. Results further showed that Influence (Self-determination and Impact) did not statistically significantly predict Work Engagement when entered into the regression equation.

When tested for collinearity in this regression the largest VIF is 1,51 (Attitude), the average VIF is 1,35, and tolerance for Influence (0,66) and Attitude (0,66) is below 1. This indicates that the interaction between dimensions can influence the regressions. This is a possible reason why job insecurity on its own was not a statistically significant predictor of Work Engagement, but when it was regressed with Psychological Empowerment it contributed

significantly. This will have an impact on the rest of the regressions as well. Based on the above mentioned, hypothesis 2, stating that Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predicts Work Engagement, can therefore be partially accepted.

Next, multiple regression analyses were performed to test whether Job Insecurity predicts Somatic Symptoms, and whether Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict Somatic Symptoms. Multiple regression analyses were carried out with Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment as independent variables and Somatic Symptoms as dependent variable.

Table 6

Regression Analysis – Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment: Somatic Symptoms

Model		Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	p	F	R	R ²	ΔR ²
		B	SE	Beta						
1							8,49	0,16	0,03	0,02
	(Constant)	24,22	1,51		16,02	0,00				
	Job Insecurity	0,28	0,10	0,16	0,004	0,00*				
2 ^a							8,18	0,27	0,07	0,07
	(Constant)	37,36	3,72		10,04	0,00				
	Job insecurity	0,19	0,10	0,11	1,98	0,05				
	Influence	-0,15	0,08	-0,12	-1,74	0,08				
	Attitude	-0,20	0,10	-0,13	-1,98	0,05				

* $p < 0,05$ – statistically significant

From Table 6 it is evident that affective Job Insecurity was found to have a statistically significant amount of predictive value with regard to Somatic Symptoms ($F = 8,49$, $p \leq 0,05$, $R^2 = 0,03$). An R^2 of 0,03 was obtained, suggesting that Job Insecurity, that is uncertainty about job continuity, predicted 3% of the variance in Somatic Symptoms.

Job Insecurity, Attitude (Meaning and Competence) and Influence (Self-determination and Impact) predicted 7% of the variance in Somatic Symptoms. Results further showed that not one of them was a significant predictor with regard to Somatic Symptoms. Based on the above mentioned, hypothesis 3, stating that Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predicts Somatic Symptoms, can therefore be partially accepted.

Next, multiple regression analyses were performed to test whether Job Insecurity predicts Social Dysfunction, and whether Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict Social Dysfunction.

Table 7

Regression Analysis – Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment: Social Dysfunction

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
	B	SE	Beta						
1						2,83	0,10	0,01	0,01
(Constant)	13,35	0,68		19,51	0,00				
Job Insecurity	0,07	0,04	0,10	1,68	0,09				
						7,38	0,26	0,08	0,06
2									
(Constant)	20,01	1,68		11,94	0,00				
Job Insecurity	0,03	0,04	0,04	0,67	0,50				
Influence	-0,06	0,04	-0,10	-1,54	0,13				
Attitude	-0,12	0,05	-0,17	-2,54	0,01*				

* $p < 0,05$ – statistically significant

From Table 7 it is evident that affective Job Insecurity was found not to have a statistically significant amount of predictive value with regard Social Dysfunction ($F = 2,83$, $p \leq 0,05$, $R^2 = 0,01$). Job Insecurity, that is uncertainty about job continuity, predicted 1% of the variance in Social Dysfunction.

An increase in the R^2 was obtained when the sub-scales of Psychological Empowerment was entered into the regression analysis ($F = 7,38$, $p < 0,05$, $R^2 = 0,08$). Results further showed that Influence (Self-determination and Impact) did not have a significant amount of predictive value with regard to Social Dysfunction. Based on the above mentioned, hypothesis 4, stating that Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predicts Social Dysfunction, can therefore be partially accepted.

Next, multiple regression analyses were performed to test whether Job Insecurity predicts Social Dysfunction, and whether Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict Social Dysfunction. Firstly, multiple regression analyses were carried out with Job Insecurity

and Psychological Empowerment as independent variables and Social Dysfunction as dependent variable.

Table 8

Regression Analysis – Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment: Depression.

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
	B	SE	Beta						
1						19,74	0,25	0,06	0,06
(Constant)	7,51	0,74		10,19	0,00				
Job Insecurity	0,21	0,05	0,25	4,44	0,00*				
						9,38	0,29	0,08	0,08
2									
(Constant)	12,23	1,84		6,66	0,00				
Job Insecurity	0,18	0,05	0,21	3,76	0,00				
Influence	-0,01	0,04	-0,01	-0,20	0,84				
Attitude	-1,11	0,05	-0,15	-2,23	0,03*				

**p* < 0,05 – statistically significant

From Table 8 it is evident that affective Job Insecurity was found to have a statistically significant amount of predictive value with regard to Depression ($F = 19,74$, $p \leq 0,05$, $R^2 = 0,06$). Job Insecurity, that is uncertainty about job continuity, predicted 6% of the variance in Depression. Job Insecurity and Attitude (Meaning and Competence) predicted 8% of the variance in Severe Depression, with Attitude a significant predictor. Results further showed that Influence (Self-determination and Impact) did not have a significant amount of predictive value with regard to Depression. Based on the above mentioned, hypothesis 5, stating that Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predicts Severe Depression, can therefore be partially accepted.

DISCUSSION

The objectives of this study were to investigate the relationship between Job Insecurity, Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment and General Health of educators in the Sedibeng West District.

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to specify the relationship between variables. No practically significant correlation coefficients were found between Job

Insecurity and any of the other constructs. Job Insecurity was however found to be statistically significantly and negatively correlated to Influence and Attitude. Higher levels of Job Insecurity are therefore associated with lower levels of perceived Psychological Empowerment (as measured by Influence and Attitude). Tjeku (2006) as well as Moeletsi (2003) reported a practically significant correlation of medium effect between Job Insecurity and total Psychological Empowerment. Conversely, Reynders (2005) and Stander (2007) reported an insignificant correlation between Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment as well as its dimensions respectively. Moeletsi (2003) reported a practically significant negative correlation of medium effect between Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment. This implies if educators feel more insecure they will experience less meaning in what they are doing. They will perceive to have less of an impact on what is happening in their environments. Educators that fear losing their job could even feel less competent.

A statistically significant negative correlation was obtained between Job Insecurity and Work Engagement. This indicates that feelings of uncertainty about ones job will be associated with lower levels of Work Engagement. This corresponds with the research of Thinane (2005), who reported a practically significant negative correlation of medium effect between Job Insecurity and Work Engagement. Stander (2007) found that uncertainty about job continuity correlates negatively with Work Engagement. Educators that are concerned about loosing their job will feel less engaged in their work environment.

A statistically significant correlation was obtained between Job Insecurity and three dimensions of General Health (Somatic Symptoms, Social Dysfunction and Severe Depression). Grant (2005) reported a practically significant relationship of medium effect with General Health. These findings imply that higher levels of Job Insecurity in educators can increase the occurrence of Somatic Symptoms, Social Dysfunction and Severe Depression. From the above results it is clear that feelings of uncertainty about one's job future have a negative impact on employees wellness in this case their experience of empowerment will lead to positive engagement and General Health.

A practically significant correlation of medium effect was obtained between Influence and Work Engagement as measured by the UWES. Implying educators with a higher level of self-determination and impact will feel driven in their job. Influence also shows statistically

significant negative correlations with Somatic Symptoms, Social Dysfunction and depression. The Attitude factor obtained a practically significant correlation of large effect with Work Engagement and furthermore statistically negatively correlates with the three GHQ factors, being Somatic Symptoms, Social Dysfunction and Severe Depression. Hochwalder and Brucefors (2005) confirm that empirical findings have indicated a negative relationship between Psychological Empowerment and ill health (GHQ).

Sonnentag (2003) found that engaged employees tend to be healthier and have a more positive work influence. A practically significant negative correlation of medium effect was obtained between Work Engagement and Social Dysfunction. These imply that when educators feel less engaged in their work environment, they might experience stress leading to General Health problems. Somatic Symptoms and Severe Depression showed a statistically significant correlation with Work Engagement. Hakanen, Bakker and Schaufeli (2006), found a positive correlation between Work Engagement and self-reported health (General Health) in their study among Finnish teachers. Van Zyl (2005) found a statistically significant correlation between Work Engagement and two factors of GHQ (Somatic Symptoms and Severe Depression), and a practically significant correlation of medium effect to Anxiety/Insomnia and Social Dysfunction. The above correlations were all found to be statistically and practically significant, with a medium to large effect. Based on the above mentioned, hypothesis 1, stating that a relationship exist between Job insecurity, Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment and General Health, can therefore be accepted.

Regression analysis indicated that Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment as measured by Attitude predict 33% of the variance explained in Work Engagement. Implying that empowered educators, who believe that their job is meaningful and are confident about their ability to do their job will feel secured in their jobs and consequently become enthusiastic about it. Results further showed that Psychological Empowerment as measured by Influence did not statistically significantly predict Work Engagement when entered into the regression equation. Based on the findings reported in this research, hypothesis 2, which states that Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predicts Work Engagement is partially accepted.

Affective Job Insecurity was found to have a statistically significant amount of predictive value of 3% with regard to Somatic Symptoms. When entered with Attitude and Influence,

Job Insecurity predicted 7% of the variance in Somatic Symptoms. Suggesting that high feelings of uncertainty about ones job will lead to lower levels of health. Based on the above mentioned, hypothesis 3, stating that Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predicts Somatic Symptoms, can therefore be partially accepted.

With regard to Job Insecurity (independent variable) and Social Dysfunction (dependent variable), a statistically insignificant amount of predictive value of 1% was found. A further 6% predictive value was found when Job Insecurity was entered with Attitude and Influence. Results further indicated that only Attitude have a significant amount of predictive value with regard to Social Dysfunction, and no significant amount of predictive value was found with Influence. Based on the above mentioned, hypothesis 4, stating that Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predicts Social Dysfunction, can therefore be partially accepted.

Lastly, Job Insecurity was found to have a statistically significant amount of predictive value of 6% of the variance in Severe Depression. Results further indicated 8% of predictive value when Job Insecurity entered with Attitude and Influence. Consequently Attitude showed a significant amount of predictive value with regard to Depression, and no significant amount of predictive value was found with Influence. When educators experience high feelings of Job Insecurity, they are likely to experience feelings of hopelessness. Based on the above mentioned, hypothesis 5, stating that Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predicts Severe Depression, can therefore be partially accepted.

Attitude, that is meaning and competence, was a significant predictor of the variance in Work Engagement, Severe Depression and Social Dysfunction. These indicate that the importance of meaningful work and employee's experience of self-efficacy (competence) in creating higher levels of Work Engagement and General Health. It will be valuable for the organisations to create meaningful work and develop employee feelings of self-efficacy (competence).

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research suggests that although Job Insecurity research has burgeoned in recent years, little attention has been paid to the relationship between Job Insecurity, Psychological

Empowerment, Work Engagement and General Health in the Department of Education. Menon (2001) points out that if Psychological Empowerment is considered a psychological state, it provides a mediating link between empowering acts and employee outcomes such as satisfaction, involvement (decision making) and organisational commitment. Having access to information about the mission of the Department of Education such as the constant revision of the curriculum can enhance employee empowerment. Organisational rank and tenure have been associated with higher levels of empowerment. Empowered employees have the power to make decisions that fit within the scope and domain of their work. The lack of access to “power tools” such as opportunity, information, support, and resources impedes educators to advance their ability within their career (Kanter, 1997). As a result of their own involvement in a school’s decision-making process, empowered educators assume more responsibility, have improved morale, and generate better solutions to the problems they encounter (Kanter, 1997).

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CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter conclusions are made with regard to research questions put forward in the first Chapter. Limitations of the current research will be discussed, and recommendations for the schools and future research will be provided.

3.1 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions regarding the specific theoretical objectives and the results of the empirical research are made.

3.1.1 Conclusions regarding the specific theoretical objectives

In line with the first specific objective stated in chapter 1, Job Insecurity, Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment as well as General Health were conceptualised from the literature.

Job Insecurity was conceptualised as a global or a multidimensional concept or a job stressor (Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999). In most cases, Job Insecurity has been defined in terms of the global viewpoint, suggesting the threat of job loss or job discontinuity (Caplan, Cobb, French, van Harrison & Pinneau, 1980). The multidimensional definition of Job Insecurity holds that it refers not only to the affective level of the measure of uncertainty that an employee feels about his or her job continuity (fear of job loss), but also on a cognitive level to the continuity of certain dimensions of the job (job certainty) (Borg & Elizur, 1992; Mauno & Kinnunen, 2002). Sharing the same view, De Witte (2005a) adds that the definition of Job Insecurity must include the assumption that Job Insecurity is a stressor, made up of the cognitive prospects of losing a job and the affective experience of the concern thereof.

Psychological Empowerment is an important construct because it has the potential to influence outcomes in a positive way, thereby benefiting both individuals and organisations (Liden & Tewksbury, 1995). Empowerment refers to psychological aspects, which consist of a set of conditions necessary for intrinsic motivation. Over the past decade, many researchers

and practitioners have embraced Psychological Empowerment as a means of increasing decision-making at lower organisational levels, while at the same time enriching the work lives of employees. Conger & Kanungo (1988) emphasised that an individual's power needs are met when individuals discover/observe they possess power, or when they believe they can deal with events and situations.

Menon (2001) highlights that if Psychological Empowerment is considered a psychological state it provides a mediating link between empowering acts and employee outcomes such as contentment, participation and organisational commitment. Menon (2001) also emphasises that the psychological state of the employee is more relevant to the success or failure of the empowerment initiative than to the fundamental nature of empowerment as experienced by the employee. Spreitzer (1995) describes Psychological Empowerment as an increased intrinsic motivation appearing in four cognitions, namely: meaning (value of work goal or purpose); competence (self-efficacy) self-determination (autonomy in initiation and continuation of work behaviour); and impact (influence on work outcomes).

Work Engagement was conceptualised as a positive, persistent affective-cognitive, and work-related orientation, characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2002). Vigour was conceptualised as being related to high energy levels, mental resilience, willingness to exert effort and persistence. Dedication was conceptualised as being related to enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, challenge and a sense of significance. Absorption was defined as referring to a state where time flies and where the individual finds it difficult to detach him or her from the job (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2002).

In this research, **General Health** is conceptualised by the theory of Goldberg and Hillier (1979) which identifies four concepts, namely: Somatic Symptoms, Anxiety and Insomnia, Social Dysfunction and Severe Depression. The Constitution of the World Health Organisation (2000), defines General Health as a condition of complete physical, social and mental well-being; it is not merely the absence of disease or sickness.

Research has found Job Insecurity to be related to a decrease in General Health and Work Engagement (Burchell 1994; De Witte, 2000; Probst, 2002). Psychological Empowerment is conceptualised as a state that holds both individual and organisational benefits, including General Health and Work Engagement (Greasley, Bryman, Price, Soetanto & King (2005); Hochwalder and Brucefors, (2005). It has however been found that Psychological

Empowerment may decline due to feelings of Job Insecurity. For this reason it is perceived that Psychological Empowerment may play an intervening role in a stressor-strain relationship, such as Job Insecurity impact on Work Engagement (Britt, Adler, & Bartone, 2001), and General Health (Hochwalder & Brucefors, 2005).

3.1.2 Conclusions regarding the specific empirical objectives

The first specific empirical objective was to determine the relationship between Job Insecurity, Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment and General Health of educators in the Sedibeng West District. Job Insecurity correlated negatively with Psychological Empowerment as measured by Influence and Attitude, meaning that high levels of Job Insecurity will lead to lower feelings of empowerment. Job Insecurity also indicated a statistically negative correlation with Work Engagement. This implies that when educators experience feelings of uncertainty about their future in the school, their levels of Work Engagement will be lower. A statistically significant relationship was obtained between Job Insecurity and General Health. High feelings of uncertainty about continuity of job in educators are associated with lower levels of health.

A practically significant correlation of medium effect was obtained between Influence and Work Engagement, suggesting that high feelings of independence and control of one's job lead to high levels of Work Engagement. Both Influence and Attitude indicated a practically significant negative correlation with Somatic Symptoms, Social Dysfunction and Severe Depression. These imply that lower levels of Psychological Empowerment in one's job can be associated with lower levels of health.

The second specific empirical objective was to determine whether Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict Work Engagement. Regression analysis indicated that Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment, as measured by Attitude, predicted 33% of the variance explained in Work Engagement. Suggesting that psychologically empowered educators, who believe that their job is meaningful, who are confident about their ability to do their job, and feel more secure in their jobs will become more engaged in what they are doing. This implies that educators will be motivated to perform their work with passion.

The third specific empirical objective was to determine whether Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict Somatic Symptoms. Affective Job Insecurity predicted 3% of the variance with regard to Somatic Symptoms. But when Influence and Attitude were entered into the equation not one of them predicted Somatic Symptoms significantly. This means that high feelings of uncertainty about one's job will lead to lower levels of health.

The fourth specific empirical objective was to determine whether Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict Social Dysfunction. Affective Job Insecurity further predicted 1% of the variance with regard to Social Dysfunction. When Influence and Attitude were entered, only Attitude played a significant role in the variance of Social Dysfunction, predicting 8% of the variance. This implies that Educators, who experience feelings of uncertainty about their job, tend to experience lower levels of Social Dysfunction.

Lastly, the fifth specific empirical objective was to determine whether Job Insecurity and Psychological Empowerment predict Severe Depression. Affective Job Insecurity predicted 6% of the variance in Severe Depression. When educators experience high feelings of uncertainty about their jobs, they are likely to experience higher levels of hopelessness. With the addition of Psychological Empowerment (Influence and Attitude) a prediction of 8% of the variance was experienced. Only Attitude indicated a significant relationship, meaning that employees that experience higher levels of meaning and competence will experience less depression.

Attitude, that is meaning and competence, was a significant predictor of the variance in Work Engagement, Severe Depression and Social Dysfunction. This indicates that the importance of meaningful work and employee's experience of self-efficacy (competence) in creating higher levels of Work Engagement and General Health. It will be valuable for the organisation to create meaningful work and develop employee feelings of self-efficacy (competence). Objective 6 could not be tested because of the three factor structure on the General Health Questionnaire.

3.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Various limitations can be identified in this study.

- Participants were not required to identify themselves and consequently not all questionnaires were returned. The total population in this study was ± 500 , but only 309 questionnaires were received.
- The study only focused on one District and results were obtained from a relatively small sample of educators in the Sedibeng West District, which might probably have limited the generalisation of the findings.
- This study was conducted during the peak term (assessment administration for the year ending) for educators. Consequently this could influence a lower response rate.
- A cross-sectional design was used in this study, which is not ideal for making causal interpretations. In future, longitudinal studies should be considered where inferences in terms of cause and effect can be made.
- This study relied on self-report measures and respondents had to fill in and finish in their own time. Consequently the generality and reliability of the findings were limited. Respondents could have had doubts regarding their confidentiality and probable lack of trust between management (principals) and staff (educators).

3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are made with regard to the applicable organisation, as well as with regard to future research.

3.3.1 Recommendations for the Education Department

The Department of Education should consider improving the working conditions for educators. In principle most educators do not feel motivated to go to work due to a number of adverse conditions (Seed, 2008). Consequently these conditions impact on their well-being.

For the Department of Education to ensure a healthy working environment for educators, this study suggests the following:

- Contract: Job contracts such as contract positions and school governing body positions amongst educators may also evoke some insecurity. In line with this Sverke, Hellgren, Näswall, Chirumbolo, De Witte & Goslinga (2004) mentioned that holding

a certain type of employment contract can also influence perceptions of Job Insecurity. Educators who are hired on full-time or permanent contracts may experience less Job Insecurity. These employees may have a greater sense of being an integral part of the organisation than part-time or temporary employees would (Barling & Gallagher, 1996; Sverke & Hellgren 2002). A study done in South Africa amongst educators found the same association. It is imperative for the department to review such contracts, since they can add to high levels of stress on educators.

- **Empowerment:** In order to go on and prosper in the current challenging school environment, empowered educators must be involved in roles such as team leader, action researcher, curriculum developer, and in-house trainer. Their involvement in a school's decision-making process will result in empowered educators assuming greater responsibility, having improved confidence, and generating better solutions to the problems they encounter (Seed, 2008).
- **Training:** Training is necessary for educators to obtain new skills and attitudes, to take on the new and unfamiliar roles, and to undertake the challenges schools face. It is also critically important for everyone involved in the improvement of teaching to recognise that the path to development will not always be smooth. Most teachers will naturally stumble and make some mistakes as they get better.

3.3.2 Recommendations for the school Principals

In South Africa, the teaching profession has taken a slightly different curve as a result of the constant curriculum change. As a result this study suggests the following recommendations for school principals:

- **Leadership empowerment behaviour:** Leaders empowering behaviour, enhancing the meaningfulness of work, promoting participation in decision-making, coaching for innovative performance as well as providing independence from bureaucratic constraints, will lead to greater feelings of empowerment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Dimitriades & Maroudas, 2007). Based on this management empowering behaviour toward educator can bring about positive results with regard to their performance as well as feelings of control over their work.
- **Delegation and Authority:** School principals can adopt dimensions of leadership empowerment behaviour such as delegation of authority, emphasis on accountability

for outcomes, self-directed decision-making, and information sharing as well as skill development as mentioned by Konczak, Stelly and Trusty (2000).

- Information sharing: To optimise the performance of educators, principals and their school management teams need to share knowledge and information with the educators.
- Teacher Support and development: At the moment very little effort has been spent on the support of teachers' development. The Chisholm, Hoadley and Kivull (2005) study, which was based on a nationally representative sample of educators, shows that 40 percent of teachers reported that they were receiving little support or no support from the Department of Education.
- Role clarity and ambiguity: The proliferation of new policies in the education curriculum has not only resulted in confusion among educators, but it has also resulted in unclear roles and feelings of ambiguity.

3.3.3 Recommendations for Educators

Educators do not want to feel incompetent, therefore it is important for them to take the initiative to request self-development programmes from their school principal. The continuous change in the education system needs to be endorsed with adequate training for educator to keep their morale positive. Based on these the following recommendations are made.

- Educators need to accept the changes within the education system with a positive attitude in order to adapt objectively to these changes.
- Educators need to exercise accountability in order to make autonomous decisions that are in the interest of those served within their profession.
- Educators must be able to exercise initiative and imagination in solving problems that affect their competence as well as their profession.
- Educators need some support from their principals to assist them to manage the extensive changes in their present work environment.

3.3.4 Recommendations for further research

The results of this research were obtained from a relatively small sample of educators in the Sedibeng West District which might probably have limited generalisation of the findings. It is therefore recommended that a larger population group, representative of the education department on a national level, be used in a sample.

Research within South Africa should focus on the involvement of educators with regard to the curriculum revisions and the extent to which educators are empowered to participate in such amendments.

Future studies should focus more on the positive work-related attitudes and behaviours at work, as well as positive construct such a Work Engagement and Psychological Empowerment, and their role in the world of wellness of employees within different occupational settings.

More longitudinal studies should be conducted on the same constructs (Job Insecurity, Psychological Empowerment, Work Engagement, and General Health) in other districts and regions within the Department of Education for the purpose of comparing the results' findings.

Studies with regard to empowerment should focus more on the outcomes of Psychological Empowerment. This will provide general understanding of the impact of Psychological Empowerment on aspects like turnover, absenteeism, level of drug and alcohol intake, safety, mental and physical health as well as self-reported health which involves depression, anger, stress, and other negative outcomes.

Developing trusting relationships in schools is critical. A mutual relationship should be established and encouraged between education authorities (including principals) and educators. This can leverage the delegation of decision-making to the subordinates, which requires the education authorities and principals to take a risk that the educators will perform appropriately.

3.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter conclusions regarding the theoretical and empirical objectives were made. The limitations of the research were pointed out and recommendations were made for the organisation in which the study took place, as well as for future research. All theoretical and empirical objectives formulated for this research, have been attained.

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